

# **WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE**

## **2019 REGULAR SESSION**

**Introduced**

### **House Bill 2321**

BY DELEGATES LOVEJOY, MILLER, CANESTRARO,  
ROHRBACH, BROWN, N., WILSON, ROBINSON, BYRD,  
MAYNARD, HORNBUCKLE AND ANGELUCCI

[ Introduced January 11, 2019; Referred  
to the Committee on Fire Departments and  
Emergency Medical Services then the Judiciary.]

1 A BILL to amend and reenact §23-4-1f of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, relating  
 2 to allowing workers' compensation benefits for first responders diagnosed with post-  
 3 traumatic stress disorder resulting from an event that occurred during their employment.

*Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:*

**ARTICLE 4. DISABILITY AND DEATH BENEFITS.**

**§23-4-1f. Certain psychiatric injuries and diseases not compensable.**

1 (a) Except as provided by this section, for the purposes of this chapter, no alleged injury  
 2 or disease ~~shall~~ may be recognized as a compensable injury or disease which was solely caused  
 3 by nonphysical means and which did not result in any physical injury or disease to the person  
 4 claiming benefits. Except as otherwise provided in this section, it is the purpose of this section to  
 5 clarify that so-called mental-mental claims are not compensable under this chapter.

6 (b) For the purposes of this section:

7 (1) "First responder" means a law-enforcement officer, firefighter, emergency medical  
 8 technician, or paramedic; and

9 (2) "Post-traumatic stress disorder" means a disorder that meets the diagnostic criteria for  
 10 post-traumatic stress disorder specified by the American Psychiatric Association in the Diagnostic  
 11 and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, fifth edition, or a later edition as adopted by rule of  
 12 the insurance commissioner.

13 (b) The Legislature finds that post-traumatic stress disorder is a unique medical condition,  
 14 although it may manifest itself as a psychiatric condition that would be otherwise precluded from  
 15 workers' compensation coverage, for first responders, post-traumatic stress disorder, similar to  
 16 members of the military serving in combat, is an occupational hazard. The Legislature further  
 17 finds that because first responders are required to expose themselves to post-traumatic stress  
 18 disorder causing events during the course of their employment, and because of the severe nature  
 19 and deliberative effect of post-traumatic stress disorder, it is the moral obligation of the state to  
 20 provide coverage to this class of individuals for their work-related injury.

21           (c) Post-traumatic stress disorder suffered by a first responder is a compensable injury  
22           under this chapter upon a diagnosis by a licensed psychiatrist that the first responder suffers from  
23           the disorder and upon a finding that the disorder occurred as the result of an event or events that  
24           occurred in the course and within the scope of the first responder's employment duties.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to provide workers' compensation to first responders diagnosed with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder by a psychiatrist from an event that occurred during their employment.

Strike-throughs indicate language that would be stricken from a heading or the present law and underscoring indicates new language that would be added.