

No. 2000-66

AN ACT

HB 2262

Establishing a grant program for volunteer fire companies and volunteer ambulance services.

The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania hereby enacts as follows:

CHAPTER 1
PRELIMINARY PROVISIONS

Section 101. Short title.

This act shall be known and may be cited as the Volunteer Fire Company and Volunteer Ambulance Service Grant Act.

Section 102. Definitions.

The following words and phrases when used in this act shall have the meanings given to them in this section unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

“Advanced life support services.” The term shall have the meaning given to it in the act of July 3, 1985 (P.L.164, No.45), known as the Emergency Medical Services Act.

“Agency.” The Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency.

“Basic life support services.” The term shall have the meaning given to it in the act of July 3, 1985 (P.L.164, No.45), known as the Emergency Medical Services Act.

“Commissioner.” The State Fire Commissioner.

“Facility.” A structure or portion thereof intended for the purpose of storage or protection of firefighting apparatus, ambulances and rescue vehicles and related equipment and gear. The term does not include meeting halls, social halls, social rooms, lounges or any other facility not directly related to firefighting or the furnishing of ambulance or rescue services.

“Grant program.” The Volunteer Fire Company Grant Program established in Chapter 3 or the Volunteer Ambulance Service Grant Program established in Chapter 5.

“Invalid coach.” The term shall have the meaning given to it in the act of July 3, 1985 (P.L.164, No.45), known as the Emergency Medical Services Act.

“Volunteer ambulance service.” Any nonprofit chartered corporation, association or organization located in this Commonwealth, not associated or affiliated with any volunteer fire company or hospital and which is regularly engaged in the provision of emergency medical services, including basic life support or advanced life support services and the transportation of patients. The term shall not include any corporation, association or organization that

is primarily engaged in the operation of invalid coaches which are intended for the routine transport of persons who are convalescent or otherwise nonambulatory and do not ordinarily require emergency medical treatment while in transit.

“Volunteer fire company.” A nonprofit chartered corporation, association or organization located in this Commonwealth which provides fire protection services and which may offer other voluntary emergency services within this Commonwealth. Voluntary emergency services provided by a volunteer fire company may include voluntary ambulance and voluntary rescue services.

CHAPTER 3 VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY GRANT PROGRAM

Section 301. Establishment.

The Volunteer Fire Company Grant Program is hereby established and shall be administered by the agency in consultation with the commissioner. Grants provided under this program shall be used to improve and enhance the capabilities of the volunteer fire company to provide firefighting, ambulance and rescue services.

Section 302. Guidelines and procedures.

The agency shall develop guidelines, procedures and all applications necessary to implement the grant program. The agency shall submit the guidelines, procedures and applications to the Legislative Reference Bureau for publication in the Pennsylvania Bulletin and Pennsylvania Code within 30 days of the effective date of this act.

Section 303. Award of grants.

(a) Authorization.—The agency is hereby authorized to make a one-time grant award to each eligible volunteer fire company for the following:

(1) Construction and/or renovation of the fire company’s facility and purchase or repair of fixtures and furnishings necessary to maintain or improve the capability of the company to provide fire, ambulance and rescue services.

(2) Repair of firefighting, ambulance or rescue equipment or purchase thereof.

(3) Debt reduction associated with paragraph (1) or (2).

(b) Limits.—

(1) Except as provided in paragraph (3), grants shall be not less than \$2,500 and not more than \$15,000 per volunteer fire company.

(2) Grants shall be awarded on a pro rata basis if the total dollar amount of approved applications exceeds the amount of funds allocated in section 701.

(3) In a municipality where there are two or more volunteer fire companies and if two or more fire companies consolidated their use of equipment, firefighters and services between July 1, 1998, and the date

of enactment of this act, each entity from which the consolidated entity was created will be eligible for a grant as though it had not consolidated.

(c) Time for filing application and department action.—

(1) The agency shall provide applications for grants under this act to the fire chief and president of every volunteer fire company in this Commonwealth on or before July 7, 2000.

(2) Volunteer fire companies seeking grants under this act shall submit completed applications to the agency on or before September 1, 2000. The agency shall act to approve or disapprove the application by October 4, 2000. Applications which have not been approved or disapproved by the agency by October 4, 2000, shall be deemed approved.

(3) Applications submitted after the September 1, 2000, deadline shall be accepted by the agency, and grants may be awarded at the discretion of the agency from the reserve fund set aside under section 304.

(d) Eligibility.—To receive grant funds under this act, a volunteer fire company shall have actively responded to one or more fire emergencies since July 1, 1999.

Section 304. Reserve funds.

(1) The agency shall reserve an amount not to exceed 3% of the funds allocated in section 701 for the grant program established under this chapter for the purposes of awarding grants to volunteer fire companies that submit applications after September 1, 2000, that would have otherwise been eligible for and been awarded a grant under the grant program.

(2) No volunteer fire company may receive a grant from reserve funds in an amount greater than the amount that it would have received had it applied in a timely manner.

Section 305. Consolidation incentive.

If, after the effective date of this act, two or more volunteer fire companies consolidate their use of facilities, equipment, firefighters and services, the consolidated entity may, upon notification of the agency, be eligible for a reduction of the interest rate payable on any outstanding principal balance owed, as of the date of consolidation, by any or all of the consolidating companies to the Volunteer Companies Loan Fund for loans made under the act of July 15, 1976 (P.L.1036, No.208), known as the Volunteer Fire Company, Ambulance Service and Rescue Squad Assistance Act. The reduction in the interest rate payable shall be from 2% to 1%. Upon receipt of such notification, the agency, in conjunction with the State Fire Commissioner, shall determine and verify that the consolidated entity is in fact a bona fide consolidated volunteer fire company. If the agency determines that the consolidated entity is a bona fide consolidated volunteer fire company, it shall reduce the interest rate payable on any outstanding principal balance owed to the Volunteer Companies Loan Fund for loans

made under the Volunteer Fire Company, Ambulance Service and Rescue Squad Assistance Act for which the consolidating companies or the consolidated entity may be individually or jointly responsible. The agency may promulgate such rules and regulations as may be necessary to carry out the provisions of this section.

CHAPTER 5 VOLUNTEER AMBULANCE SERVICE GRANT PROGRAM

Section 501. Establishment.

The Volunteer Ambulance Service Grant Program is hereby established and shall be administered by the agency. Grants provided under this program shall be used to improve and enhance the capabilities of the volunteer ambulance services to provide ambulance, emergency medical, basic life support and advanced life support services.

Section 502. Guidelines and procedures.

The agency shall develop guidelines, procedures and all applications necessary to implement the grant program. The agency shall submit the guidelines, procedures and applications to the Legislative Reference Bureau for publication in the Pennsylvania Bulletin and Pennsylvania Code within 30 days of the effective date of this act.

Section 503. Award of grants.

(a) Authorization.—The agency is hereby authorized to make a one-time grant award to each eligible volunteer ambulance service for the following:

- (1) Construction and/or renovation of the volunteer ambulance service's facility and purchase or repair of fixtures and furnishings necessary to maintain or improve the capability of the ambulance service to provide ambulance, emergency medical, basic life support and advanced life support services.
- (2) Repair of ambulance equipment or purchase thereof.
- (3) Debt reduction associated with paragraph (1) or (2).

(b) Limits.—

- (1) Grants shall be not less than \$2,500 and not more than \$10,000 per volunteer ambulance service.
- (2) Grants shall be awarded on a pro rata basis if the total dollar amount of approved applications exceeds the amount of funds allocated in section 702.

(c) Time for filing application and department action.—

- (1) The agency shall provide applications for grants under this act to the president of every volunteer ambulance service in this Commonwealth on or before July 7, 2000.
- (2) Volunteer ambulance services seeking grants under this chapter shall submit completed applications to the agency on or before September 1, 2000. The agency shall act to approve or disapprove the application by October 4, 2000. Applications which have not been

approved or disapproved by the agency by October 4, 2000, shall be deemed approved.

(3) Applications submitted after the September 1, 2000, deadline shall be accepted by the agency, and grants may be awarded at the discretion of the agency from the reserve fund set aside under section 504.

Section 504. Reserve funds.

(1) The agency shall reserve an amount not to exceed 3% of the funds allocated in section 702 for the grant program established under this chapter for the purposes of awarding grants to volunteer ambulance services that submit applications after September 1, 2000, that would have otherwise been eligible for and been awarded a grant under the grant program.

(2) No volunteer ambulance service may receive a grant from reserve funds in an amount greater than the amount that it would have received had it applied in a timely manner.

CHAPTER 7 GRANT FUNDING PROVISIONS

Section 701. Volunteer Fire Company Grant Program.

The sum of \$22,000,000, or as much thereof as may be necessary, of the amount appropriated in section 225 of the act of May 24, 2000 (P.L.1086, No. 21A), known as the General Appropriation Act of 2000, to the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency is allocated for the purpose of making grants to eligible volunteer fire companies pursuant to Chapter 3.

Section 702. Volunteer Ambulance Service Grant Program.

The sum of \$3,000,000, or as much thereof as may be necessary, of the amount appropriated in section 225 of the act of May 24, 2000 (P.L.1086, No. 21A), known as the General Appropriation Act of 2000, to the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency is allocated for the purpose of making grants to eligible volunteer ambulance services pursuant to Chapter 5.

Section 703. Restriction.

No moneys from the appropriation for grants to volunteer fire companies and volunteer ambulance companies authorized in section 225 of the act of May 24, 2000 (P.L.1086, No. 21A), known as the General Appropriation Act of 2000, shall be used for expenses or costs incurred by the agency for the administration of the grant programs authorized under Chapters 3 and 5.

CHAPTER 9 MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

Section 901. Expiration of authority.

The authority of the agency to award grants under Chapters 3 and 5 shall expire June 30, 2001.

Section 902. Effective date.

This act shall take effect immediately.

APPROVED—The 22nd day of June, A.D. 2000.

THOMAS J. RIDGE