

Senate Bill 604

By: Senators Thomas of the 54th, Levetan of the 40th, Mullis of the 53rd and Price of the 56th

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED  
AN ACT

1 To amend Article 5 of Chapter 9 of Title 45 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated,  
2 relating to insuring and indemnifying law enforcement officers, firefighters, prison guards,  
3 and publicly employed emergency medical technicians, so as to define certain terms; to  
4 provide that any emergency rescue or public safety worker who suffers a condition or  
5 impairment of health that is caused by hepatitis, meningococcal meningitis, or tuberculosis,  
6 that requires medical treatment, and that results in total or partial disability or death shall be  
7 presumed to have a disability suffered in the line of duty unless the contrary is shown by  
8 competent evidence; to provide for a verification that certain health related activities did not  
9 take place; to provide for immunizations; to provide for applicability to noncompulsory  
10 insurance; to provide for certain records and notices; to provide for preconditions for such  
11 presumption to become operative; to provide for applicability; to repeal conflicting laws; and  
12 for other purposes.

13 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:**

14 **SECTION 1.**

15 Article 5 of Chapter 9 of Title 45 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to  
16 insuring and indemnifying law enforcement officers, firefighters, prison guards, and publicly  
17 employed emergency medical technicians, is amended by inserting at the end thereof a new  
18 part to read as follows:

19 **"Part 3**

20 45-9-108.1.

21 As used in this part, the term:

22 (1) 'Body fluids' means blood and body fluids containing visible blood and other body  
23 fluids to which universal precautions for prevention of occupational transmission of  
24 bloodborne pathogens, as established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,

1 apply. For purposes of potential transmission of meningococcal meningitis or  
2 tuberculosis, the term includes respiratory, salivary, and sinus fluids, including droplets,  
3 sputum, saliva, mucous, and other fluids through which infectious airborne organisms can  
4 be transmitted between persons.

5 (2) 'Emergency rescue or public safety worker' means any person employed full time by  
6 the state or any political subdivision of the state as a firefighter, paramedic, emergency  
7 medical technician, law enforcement officer, or correctional officer who, in the course  
8 of employment, runs a high risk of occupational exposure to hepatitis, meningococcal  
9 meningitis, or tuberculosis and who is not employed elsewhere in a similar capacity. Such  
10 term does not include any person employed by a public hospital operated by the state or  
11 a political subdivision of the state or any authority thereof or any person employed by a  
12 subsidiary of any such hospital.

13 (3) 'Hepatitis' means hepatitis A, hepatitis B, hepatitis non-A, hepatitis non-B, hepatitis  
14 C, or any other strain of hepatitis generally recognized by the medical community.

15 (4) 'High risk of occupational exposure' means that risk that is incurred because a person  
16 subject to the provisions of this part, in performing the basic duties associated with his  
17 or her employment:

18 (A) Provides emergency medical treatment in a setting other than a health care setting  
19 where there is a potential for transfer of body fluids between persons;

20 (B) At the site of an accident, fire, or other rescue or public safety operation, or in an  
21 emergency rescue or public safety vehicle, handles body fluids in or out of containers  
22 or works with or otherwise handles needles or other sharp instruments exposed to body  
23 fluids;

24 (C) Engages in the pursuit, apprehension, and arrest of law violators or suspected law  
25 violators and, in performing such duties, may be exposed to body fluids; or

26 (D) Is responsible for the custody, and physical restraint when necessary, of prisoners  
27 or inmates within a prison, jail, or other criminal detention facility, while on work detail  
28 outside the facility, or while being transported and, in performing such duties, may be  
29 exposed to body fluids.

30 (5) 'Occupational exposure,' in the case of hepatitis, meningococcal meningitis, or  
31 tuberculosis, means an exposure that occurs during the performance of job duties that  
32 may place a worker at risk of infection.

33 45-9-108.2.

34 Any emergency rescue or public safety worker who suffers a condition or impairment of  
35 health that is caused by hepatitis, meningococcal meningitis, or tuberculosis, that requires  
36 medical treatment, and that results in total or partial disability or death shall be presumed

1 to have a disability suffered in the line of duty unless the contrary is shown by competent  
2 evidence; provided, however, that in order to be entitled to the presumption, the emergency  
3 rescue or public safety worker must verify by sworn declaration that, to the best of his or  
4 her knowledge and belief:

5 (1) In the case of a medical condition caused by or derived from hepatitis, he or she has  
6 not:

7 (A) Been exposed, outside the scope of his or her employment, through transfer of  
8 body fluids, to any person known to have sickness or medical conditions derived from  
9 hepatitis;

10 (B) Had a transfusion of blood or blood components, other than a transfusion arising  
11 out of an accident or injury happening in connection with his or her present  
12 employment, or received any blood products for the treatment of a coagulation disorder  
13 since last undergoing medical tests for hepatitis, which tests failed to indicate the  
14 presence of hepatitis;

15 (C) Engaged in unsafe sexual practices or other high-risk behavior, as identified by the  
16 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or the Surgeon General of the United  
17 States, or had sexual relations with a person known to him or her to have engaged in  
18 such unsafe sexual practices or other high-risk behavior; or

19 (D) Used intravenous drugs not prescribed by a physician;

20 (2) In the case of meningococcal meningitis, in the ten days immediately preceding  
21 diagnosis, he or she was not exposed, outside the scope of his or her employment, to any  
22 person known to have meningococcal meningitis or known to be an asymptomatic carrier  
23 of the disease; and

24 (3) In the case of tuberculosis, in the period of time since the worker's last negative  
25 tuberculosis skin test, he or she has not been exposed, outside the scope of his or her  
26 employment, to any person known by him or her to have tuberculosis.

27 45-9-108.3.

28 Whenever any standard, medically recognized vaccine or other form of immunization or  
29 prophylaxis exists for the prevention of a communicable disease for which a presumption  
30 is granted under this part, if medically indicated in the given circumstances pursuant to  
31 immunization policies established by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices  
32 of the United States Public Health Service, an emergency rescue or public safety worker  
33 may be required by his or her employer to undergo the immunization or prophylaxis unless  
34 the worker's physician determines in writing that the immunization or other prophylaxis  
35 would pose a significant risk to the worker's health. Absent such written declaration,

1 failure or refusal by an emergency rescue or public safety worker to undergo such  
2 immunization or prophylaxis disqualifies the worker from the benefits of the presumption.

3 45-9-108.4.

4 This part does not apply to benefits payable under or granted in a noncompulsory policy  
5 of life insurance or disability insurance unless the insurer and insured have negotiated for  
6 such additional benefits to be included in the policy contract. However, the state or any  
7 political subdivision of the state may negotiate a policy contract for life and disability  
8 insurance which includes accidental death benefits or double indemnity coverage for any  
9 condition or impairment of health suffered by an emergency rescue or public safety worker,  
10 which condition or impairment is caused by a disease described in this part and results in  
11 total or partial disability or death.

12 45-9-108.5.

13 The employing agency shall maintain a record of any known or reasonably suspected  
14 exposure of an emergency rescue or public safety worker in its employ to the diseases  
15 described in this part and shall immediately notify the employee of such exposure. An  
16 emergency rescue or public safety worker shall file an incident or accident report with his  
17 or her employer of each instance of known or suspected occupational exposure to hepatitis,  
18 meningococcal meningitis, or tuberculosis.

19 45-9-108.6.

20 In order to be entitled to the presumption provided by this part:

21 (1) An emergency rescue or public safety worker must, prior to diagnosis, have  
22 undergone standard, medically acceptable tests for evidence of the communicable disease  
23 for which the presumption is sought, or evidence of medical conditions derived  
24 therefrom, which tests fail to indicate the presence of infection. This paragraph does not  
25 apply in the case of meningococcal meningitis; and

26 (2) On or after December 31, 2004, an emergency rescue or public safety worker may  
27 be required to undergo a preemployment physical examination that tests for and fails to  
28 reveal any evidence of hepatitis or tuberculosis.

29 45-9-108.7.

30 The presumption provided in this part shall apply throughout this Code; provided, however,  
31 that this part shall not change the provisions for determining eligibility for disability  
32 retirement benefits under any retirement or pension plan administered by the state or any  
33 political subdivision of the state."

1 **SECTION 2.**

2 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.