

Racial Equity and Social Justice (RESJ) Impact Statement

Office of Legislative Oversight

BILL 11-26: FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES - LENGTH OF SERVICE AWARDS PROGRAM FOR VOLUNTEERS - AMENDMENTS

SUMMARY

The Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) anticipates Bill 11-26 would have a minimal impact on racial equity and social justice (RESJ) in the County. Increasing monthly Length of Service Awards Program (LOSAP) payments to fire and rescue volunteers as proposed in this Bill is not likely to meaningfully impact racial and social inequities and disparities in the County.

PURPOSE OF RESJ IMPACT STATEMENTS

RESJ impact statements (RESJIS) evaluate the anticipated impact of legislation on racial equity and social justice in the County. RESJ is a **process** that focuses on centering the needs, leadership, and power of Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC) and communities with low incomes. RESJ is also a **goal** of eliminating racial and social inequities. Applying a RESJ lens is essential to achieve RESJ.¹ This involves seeing, thinking, and working differently to address the racial and social inequities that cause racial and social disparities.²

PURPOSE OF BILL 11-26

As described by Council staff, the Length of Service Awards Program (LOSAP) is a County program that:

“provides a monthly pension for members of a Local Fire and Rescue Department [LFRD] who have provided volunteer fire and rescue service for a certain number of years. It is similar to the defined benefit pension for career fire and rescue employees, although the amount of the pension is significantly lower. The County pays for these benefits in budget appropriations instead of establishing a trust fund.”³

Any changes to LOSAP are negotiated between the County and the authorized representative of LFRDs, which is the Montgomery County Volunteer Fire and Rescue Association (MCFVRA).

The purpose of Bill 11-26 is to implement provisions from a 2023-2026 Memorandum of Agreement between the County and MCFVRA. If enacted, Bill 11-26 would provide two four percent LOSAP payment increases for certain volunteer fire and rescue members. The first increase would apply retroactively to monthly LOSAP payments made since July 2024, and the second would apply retroactively to payments made since July 2025.⁴ The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) estimates the proposed increase in LOSAP payments would increase County expenditures by a total of \$110,500 over the next six years.⁵

The Council introduced Bill 11-26 on behalf of the County Executive on February 10, 2026.

This RESJIS builds on the one for Expedited Bill 21-23, which OLO published in April 2023.⁶ It also builds on the one for Expedited Bill 41-23, which OLO published in November 2023.⁷ Please refer to the RESJIS for Bill 21-23 for background on fire personnel and racial equity.

RESJ Impact Statement

Bill 11-26

ANTICIPATED RESJ IMPACTS

To consider the anticipated impact of Bill 11-26 on RESJ in the County, OLO recommends the consideration of two related questions:

- Who would primarily benefit or be burdened by this bill?
- What racial and social inequities could passage of this bill weaken or strengthen?

Eligible fire and rescue volunteers would benefit from increases to their monthly LOSAP payments. Data in Table A (Appendix) shows the County's fire and rescue volunteers are predominantly White. Black, Latinx, and to a lesser extent, Asian community members are underrepresented among fire and rescue volunteers.

As noted in the RESJIS for Bill 41-23, increased benefits through LOSAP could attract more people to volunteer firefighting roles in the County. However, absent changes to recruitment strategy and organizational culture, this incentive alone is not likely to attract and retain sufficient BIPOC volunteers to improve disproportionalities in racial and ethnic representation among fire and rescue volunteers.⁸ Further, in general, the small amount of resources devoted to this Bill is not likely to meaningfully impact racial inequities and disparities in the County.

Therefore, OLO anticipates Bill 11-26 would have a minimal impact on RESJ in the County.

RECOMMENDED AMENDMENTS

The County's RESJ Act requires OLO to consider whether to recommend amendments to bills that could reduce racial and social inequities and advance RESJ.⁹ OLO anticipates Bill 11-26 would have a minimal impact on RESJ in the County. As such, OLO does not offer recommended amendments. However, should the Council seek to improve the RESJ impact of this Bill, OLO offers one policy option for Council consideration:

- **Review findings and recommendations from comprehensive equity assessment with Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service (MCFRS) and BIPOC community stakeholders.** In September 2022, the National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) published a comprehensive equity assessment for MCFRS. NAPA was tasked with evaluating the following areas in MCFRS through the lens of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI):¹⁰
 - Internal practices (recruiting, hiring, training, promotions, evaluations);
 - Member perceptions of organizational commitment to DEI;
 - Knowledge of community characteristics;
 - Citizen complaints and outcomes;
 - Emergency and non-emergency calls for service; and
 - Trust and knowledge of the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaint process.

The Council could discuss findings and recommendations from the report with MCFRS staff and BIPOC community stakeholders to identify policy solutions and investments for diversifying the MCFRS workforce, including volunteers, and addressing other RESJ concerns arising from the assessment. For instance, the report recognized that reactivating and investing in MCFRS's high school cadet program, including making it a paid program, could be a promising strategy for increasing diversity in MCFRS.

RESJ Impact Statement

Bill 11-26

CAVEATS

Two caveats to this RESJIS should be noted. First, predicting the impact of bills on RESJ is challenging due to data limitations, uncertainty, and other factors. Second, this RESJIS is intended to inform the Council’s decision-making process rather than determine it. Thus, any conclusion made in this statement does not represent OLO’s endorsement of, or objection to, the bill under consideration.

APPENDIX

Table A: County Fire and Rescue Volunteers by Race and Ethnicity, 2022¹¹

Race or ethnicity	% MCFRS Volunteers	% County Population
Asian	12.4	15.4
Black	6.4	18.6
Native American	0.2	0.6
Pacific Islander	0.3	0.0
White	70.8	42.1
Latinx	8.3	21.0

Source: [“Building Organizational Capacity for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Fire and Rescue Service,”](#) National Academy of Public Administration, pg. 56 and [Table DP05](#), 2024 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Census Bureau.

¹ Definition of racial equity and social justice adopted from M. Gamblin et al., [“Applying Racial Equity to U.S. Federal Nutrition Programs,”](#) Bread for the World and [Racial Equity Tools](#).

² Ibid.

³ [Introduction Staff Report for Expedited Bill 21-23](#), Montgomery County Council, Introduced November 14, 2023, pg. 2.

⁴ [Introduction Staff Report for Bill 11-26](#), Montgomery County Council, Introduced February 10, 2026.

⁵ Fiscal Impact Statement for Bill 11-26, [Introduction Staff Report for Bill 11-26](#), pg. (11).

⁶ [RESJIS for Expedited Bill 21-23](#), Office of Legislative Oversight, April 25, 2023.

⁷ [RESJIS for Expedited Bill 41-23](#), Office of Legislative Oversight, March 2, 2026.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ [Bill 27-19, Administration – Human Rights – Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice – Racial Equity and Social Justice Advisory Committee – Established, Montgomery County Council](#).

¹⁰ [“Building Organizational Capacity for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Fire and Rescue Service,”](#) NAPA, September 2022.

¹¹ Racial groups included in this table are non-Latinx.