

# Sen. Jacque: Named 2023 fire chiefs legislator of the year

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WISCONSIN DELLS, WI... State Sen. André Jacque (R-De Pere) was named the 2023 “State Legislator of the Year” over the weekend by the Wisconsin State Fire Chiefs Association (WSFCA) for his active support of those who are always there to risk their lives for us in emergency situations.

“I am deeply honored to be recognized by these dedicated men and women who protect our families,” Sen. Jacque said. “Those who put their lives on the line to protect us are true heroes, and they deserve all the support we can give them.”

Sen. Jacque, a member of the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety, authored the bipartisan “Public Safety PTSD Coverage Act,” which now provides mental health coverage under workman’s compensation for first responders and other public safety officers whose jobs require them to rush toward, rather than away from danger.

“Increasing suicide rates for first responders suffering from PTSD are now outpacing on-duty deaths,” Sen. Jacque said. “This condition can be treated effectively, and it is critical that the men and women we depend on have access to treatment.”

First responders are routinely subjected to catastrophic incidents involving severe injury and death at a rate much greater than the general workforce. Unfortunately, the state only provided workers compensation for mental harm or emotional stress if an injured employee shows that it was caused by an incident beyond the day-to-day mental stresses which similar employees experience.

“Firefighters and other first responders were held to that same standard,” Sen. Jacque said. “So, although the regular stress they face is unimaginable to the

average Wisconsin worker, the State Supreme Court ruled it is no greater than that of the average first responder, so they were not eligible for mental health treatment under workers compensation.”

Sen. Jacque’s bill, signed into law in 2021, eliminated this “greater dimensions” requirement for these public safety professions, and established that repeated everyday exposure to dangerous high stress events can trigger PTSD as much as a single traumatic event.

Sen. Jacque has previously been recognized as Legislator of the Year on multiple occasions over the past several sessions by numerous statewide public safety groups, including the Wisconsin Professional Police Association, Wisconsin Chiefs of Police Association, Professional Fire Fighters of Wisconsin, Wisconsin District Attorneys and Assistant District Attorneys Association, Wisconsin State Crime Stoppers, and Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD). He has authored laws that protect crime victims, closed the child enticement and hit-and-run loopholes, invest in crime prevention, restored the ability of law enforcement to require suspected drunk drivers to submit to blood draws, improved response to domestic violence and human trafficking, and wrote law enforcement process reforms that have saved law enforcement agencies and local property taxpayers millions of dollars.