SENATE, No. 324

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

Introduced Pending Technical Review by Legislative Counsel

PRE-FILED FOR INTRODUCTION IN THE 1996 SESSION

By Senator LITTELL

AN ACT concerning the qualifications for initial appointment as a local law enforcement officer, amending N.J.S.40A:14-122 and supplementing chapter 14 of Title 40A of the New Jersey Statutes.

BE IT ENACTED by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:

1. N.J.S.40A:14-122 is amended to read as follows:

40A:14-122. General qualifications of members of police department and force; temporary appointments; absences from duty.

Except as otherwise provided by law, no person shall be appointed as a member of the police department and force, unless he:

1. is a citizen of the United States;
2. is sound in body and of good health sufficient to satisfy the board of trustees of the police and firemen's retirement system of New Jersey as to his eligibility for membership in the retirement system;
3. has a high school diploma or an equivalency certificate and is able to read, write and speak the English language well and intelligently;
4. is of good moral character, and has not been convicted of any criminal offense involving moral turpitude.

The appointing body, officer or officers of the municipality when authorized so to do, may employ such officers and other personnel for said police department and force as temporary employees in emergencies, or for certain specified parts of the year, as needed.

Except as otherwise provided by law, any permanent member or officer of such police department and force who shall be absent from duty without just cause or leave of absence, for a continuous period of 5 days, shall cease to be a member of such police department and force.

(cf: P.L.1971, c.443, s.4)

EXPLANATION - Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets [thus] in the above bill is not enacted and intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined thus is new matter.
2. (New section) In any municipality wherein Title 11A (Civil Service) of the New Jersey Statutes is operative, the governing body of the municipality may establish, by ordinance, minimum educational requirements for applicants for initial appointment to the police department which exceed those set forth in paragraph (3) of N.J.S.40A:14-122.

3. This act shall take effect January 1 next following enactment.

STATEMENT

This bill raises the minimum educational qualifications for applicants for initial appointment to a municipal police department. Under current law (N.J.S.40A:14-122), applicants are only required to be able to read, write and speak English "well and effectively." This bill would require applicants also to have earned either a high school diploma or an equivalency certificate. Applicants for firefighter positions have been statutorily required to have high school diplomas since 1981.

The bill also authorizes municipalities operating under Title 11A (Civil Service) of the New Jersey Statutes to adopt ordinances which would require even higher educational standards for initial appointment to the police department.

Law enforcement officers are highly paid professionals who are accorded great authority and responsibility in our society. It is in the public interest to raise the minimum educational requirements for those seeking to enter this profession.

Raises educational requirements for certain law enforcement officers; permits civil service municipalities to adopt higher educational requirements.