

Committee Questions Ethics, Safety of Letting County Workers Panhandle in the Street for Charity

At issue is the Montgomery County Fire and Rescue's "Fill the Boot" campaign, a fundraiser for the Muscular Dystrophy Association.

By [Tiffany Arnold](#)

It was inappropriate and unsafe for Montgomery County workers in uniform to panhandle in the street during official work hours in order to raise money for charity, a Montgomery County Council committee agreed Monday.

The Government Operations and Fiscal Policy committee supported (2-1) a bill that would prohibit county employees from standing in a roadway, median divider or intersection in order to solicit donations from drivers.

At issue was the Montgomery County Fire and Rescue's "Fill the Boot" campaign, an annual fundraiser for the Muscular Dystrophy Association for which fire and rescue workers trawl medians and roadways seeking donations from drivers. Last year's "Fill the Boot" fundraiser was held in September.

Montgomery County law generally prohibits county employees from soliciting gifts during official work hours or while wearing an official county uniform, unless it is a charity drive approved by the county executive, said Robert H. Drummer, the council's senior legislative attorney, during the meeting.

According to county records, "Fill the Boot" had received the County Executive Isiah Leggett's blessing in 2007. But the bill's sponsors — Councilman Phil Andrews, D-district 3, Craig Rice, D-district 2, and Council President Valerie Ervin, D-district 5 — said this type of fundraising still posed ethical and safety issues.

Ervin and Councilwoman Nancy Navarro, D-district 4, who chairs the three-person committee, favored endorsing the bill, leaving Councilman Hans Riemer, D-at large, as the bill's sole opponent.

The bill was introduced April 5. A public hearing was held May 3.