



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jack M. Martins

Senator Martins' Bill to Assist Firefighters Awaits Governor's Signature

JACK M. MARTINS June 28, 2012

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Long Island is blessed to have its fire services provided by dedicated volunteers who commit their time and talent, often entering dangerous situation at all hours of the day and night, in order to protect their neighbors.

When the Firemen's Association of the State of New York (FASNY) brought forth a concern, Senator Jack M. Martins, chairman of the Senate Standing Committee on Local Government, sponsored legislation to alleviate the concern. It passed both houses overwhelmingly and now awaits Governor Cuomo's signature.

In 2008, a new law went into effect requiring the use of safety ropes and system components in order to protect the health and safety of firefighters. Although the law was well-intended, it restricted the ability to equip firefighters with the most updated equipment by stating that equipment has to be in line with the 2006 edition of the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1983 Standard on Fire Service Life Safety Rope and System Components.

Safety ropes and system components include only ropes, safety harnesses, belts, ascending devices, carabiners, descent control devices, rope grab devices and snap-links. The law, however, does not allow for the use of other equipment that may be suitable for a firefighter to escape from an above-grade structure fire. In addition, based on the current law, firefighters are unable to take advantage in changes in technology to be better equipped to fight the dangers of a fire.

Senator Martins' legislation (S7677) amends the law to allow consideration of the appropriate safety and evacuation equipment and provide fire departments the flexibility to equip their firefighters with the equipment that will best enable them to serve their communities while improving safety for the firefighters.

"We are extremely fortunate to have fire departments and companies here that are comprised of dedicated volunteers who respond to calls during all hours to protect the community. They deserve to have equipment that will not only enable them to do their jobs the best, but also preserve their safety," Senator Martins said. "The bill will allow for equipment that reflects improvements in technology and will potentially save lives."

"The entire fire service, including the State Chiefs Association, Fire Districts Association and the Firemen's Association of the State of New York is strongly supportive of Senator Jack Martins and of the legislation he sponsored to clarify and improve current law providing for escape systems to be available for Volunteer Firefighters to be used for above ground evacuation" stated David Jacobowitz, President of the statewide association that represents rank and file volunteer firefighters. "Senator Martins followed this issue from beginning to end, and we are grateful for his commitment to our issues."