



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James L. Seward

## Change Needed In Volunteer Firefighter Driver Requirements

JAMES L. SEWARD May 12, 2009

ALBANY, 05/12/09-- New York State Senator James L. Seward (R/C/I-Oneonta) is calling for a change in the vehicle and traffic law to allow volunteer emergency responders to operate fire trucks and other emergency vehicles without having to get commercial drivers' licenses (CDL).

A little known 2005 amendment requires first responders to have CDLs to drive fire trucks except in the case of an emergency. The requirement means firefighters can drive to the scene of an emergency, but not back to the station. They are also unable to drive to training sessions or even in community parades.

**“This loophole in the vehicle and traffic law needs to be corrected so our volunteers don’t need to break the law every time they drive a fire truck or ambulance back from the scene of an emergency,”** said Senator Seward.

Seward is a co-sponsor of bipartisan legislation (senate bill 1624B) which would clear up the discrepancy in the law. The amended law would also allow firefighters to drive vehicles for drills, fire inspections, public education and public events.

**“Our volunteer first responders risk their lives to protect our families, homes and businesses. They also take part in numerous community events. Correcting this glitch in the law is essential to continuing these valuable services,”** Seward concluded.

Several statewide groups, including the New York State Association of Fire Chiefs, support an immediate change in the law.