



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

John J. Bonacic

Bonacic: Fire Truck Driver License Issue Finally Fixed!

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MAY 20, 2009: State Senator John J. Bonacic today applauded the bi-partisan effort to fully correct the CDL license fiasco which threatened local volunteer fire departments with the inability to train or even participate in parades.

The State Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) had directed that while any firefighter could drive a fire truck to a fire, only CDL licensed drivers could drive the truck home, or in parades, or on a training exercise. Many departments have no CDL licensed drivers at all. The DMV interpretation, therefore, meant that if a fire truck was driven in a non-emergency situation, its insurance coverage was at risk and its driver could be charged with breaking the law. It created substantial concerns for area firefighters.

“Our firefighters are community heroes. Long after 9/11, New Yorkers and all Americans must remember the bravery our firefighters show in times of ultimate crisis. Laws should be made to help them, not stand in the way of their training,” Senator Bonacic said.

This year’s State budget allegedly fixed the problem for volunteer fire departments, but in fact did not. On the Senate floor, during the budget debate, Senator Bonacic called the error to the attention of the Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee and he agreed to later pass more legislation to address the issue. A transcript of the budget debate is available at www.nysenate.gov/senator/john-j-bonacic under Reports.

The Senate and Assembly have now passed a true fix to the problem and Governor Paterson is expected to immediately sign the bill, thereby allowing fire trucks to participate in Memorial Day parades.

“This is what happens when a State budget is drafted in secrecy and rushed to print. Unnecessary errors are made. Nonetheless, I appreciate the willingness to correct this error, once the inadequacy of the original solution was pointed out,” Senator Bonacic said.

“Dozens of fire departments have contacted me about this problem. For bureaucracy to get in the way of firefighters is absurd. I am pleased this problem could be corrected,” concluded Senator Bonacic.

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