



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Betty Little

SENATE OKs BILL TO ADDRESS CDL ISSUE FOR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

BETTY LITTLE May 22, 2009

Legislation to correct an oversight that made the operation of emergency vehicles by most firefighters illegal was approved by the Senate today. The legislation, cosponsored by Senator Betty Little, passed the Assembly yesterday and is expected to be signed by Governor David Paterson.

Under current regulations, a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) is required for the operation of fire vehicles except when they are in use in an emergency situation. An unintended consequence of this new regulation would make it against the law for firefighters without a CDL to operate fire trucks for training sessions or in a parade.

The bill amends Section 501-a of the Vehicle and Traffic Law to clarify that the current exemption from CDL requirements for police vehicles, fire vehicles and vehicles used to provide emergency medical service applies not only during their use in emergency situations but also in the performance of official duties, or activities related to the execution of emergency governmental functions.

"A change in state law four years ago inadvertently created a problem that allowed firefighters to drive a fire truck to an emergency but not return it to the firehouse unless

they had a commercial driver's license," said Little. "Not surprisingly, I heard from a lot of volunteers who sought a correction."

Little said the law would take effect immediately. If signed by the governor in the next few days, firefighters would be permitted by law drive the fire apparatus in Memorial Day parades.