



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Brian X. Foley

Sen. Foley Secures Increased Support for Volunteer Firefighters & Emergency Workers

BRIAN X. FOLEY September 16, 2009

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Legislation Unanimously Passes Senate State Senator Brian X. Foley (D – Blue Point) announced the passage of critical legislation which helps fire departments and other emergency service providers throughout the state recruit and retain volunteers. The legislation (S4982), sponsored by Foley, establishes the Volunteer Firefighters and Volunteer Emergency Services Recruitment and Retention Fund.

Residents will be able to contribute to the fund when they file their tax return by checking a box and indicating how much they would like to donate. The donation will be completely

voluntary and will not cost the state anything.

"I am proud to stand with the thousands of Long Islanders who serve their communities everyday as volunteer firefighters and emergency service workers," said Foley, who has made helping firefighters a major priority during his first year in the Senate. "They put their lives on the line to protect their neighborhoods and ask for very little in return. This legislation will make it easier for New Yorkers to support these brave men and women by providing departments whose ranks are declining with funds to actively recruit and retain members."

The Volunteer Fund will be managed jointly by the Commissioner of Tax and Finance and the Comptroller, who will authorize expenditures from the fund for grants. The Office of Fire Prevention and Control will communicate with local volunteer units and recommend grant allocations on a need by need basis.

"We thank Senator Foley for his continued support," said Suffolk County Fire Chiefs in a joint statement in support of the legislation. "We look forward to continuing our strong relationship and working together on issues in the future."

"This legislation establishes in NYS Tax Law a provision that allows a taxpayer to make a voluntary contribution to the fund through a check-off on their income tax return and is considered by the Firemen's Association of New York (FASNY) to be a key element in continued recruitment for volunteer fire and EMS responders," said Tom Cuff, President of FASNY.

All funds will be directed towards enhancing recruitment and retention efforts for volunteer firefighters and other emergency service volunteers, who undertake dangerous and grueling responsibilities with no compensation.

According to a USA Today report from 2005, approximately three-quarters of the nation's 1.1 million firefighters are volunteers. Unfortunately, over the last two decades, the number of volunteers has dropped off by 10%. New York State had 140,000 volunteer firefighters 15 years ago, but today has just about 100,000.

In addition to being passed unanimously in the Senate, the legislation was passed in the Assembly and is now awaiting signing by Governor Paterson.