



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

William T. Stachowski

Senator Stachowski Announces New Law to Help Volunteer Firefighters and Ambulance Workers Qualify for More Affordable Health Insurance

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Senator William T. Stachowski (D, Lake View) today announced that legislation (S.5111) he cosponsored to help men and women who volunteer in their local fire or ambulance companies qualify for more affordable health insurance has been signed

into law by Governor Paterson. Chapter 71 of the Laws of 2010 allows any public corporation to extend health services and insurance to volunteer firefighters and ambulance workers.

“There are almost 120,000 volunteer firefighters and emergency personnel in New York State,” said Senator Stachowski. “I have a strong feeling of gratitude for these highly trained men and women who so unselfishly give of their time, talent and skills and put themselves at risk for the well being of others. Our communities truly depend on the life-saving services they provide for us every day. This new law will allow these volunteers, many of whom are without insurance or paying very expensive premiums, to receive affordable coverage through their municipality, including those local governmental entities offering their employers health insurance through the New York State Health Insurance Plan (NYSHIP.) Currently, NYSHIP is offered in approximately 900 municipalities across the state.”

Volunteer firefighters make up the largest number of firefighters in New York State. According to the Office of Fire and Prevention, there are approximately 96,000 volunteer firefighters in New York State compared to 18,500 career firefighters. In addition, New York has 5,380 Emergency Medical Service (EMS) volunteers, 16,597 Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT's) and 1,807 paramedics.

Senator Stachowski added, “Some volunteer fire departments and districts are currently facing recruitment shortages. By making health insurance more affordable for these dedicated individuals, this new law will ease a serious financial burden on them and their families and also help encourage more residents to join their local volunteer fire departments.”

The new law takes effect immediately.