



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Rich Funke

Governor Cuomo signs Funke & Morelle legislation supporting volunteer firefighters and ambulance workers

RICH FUNKE November 17, 2016



Assembly Majority Leader Joseph D. Morelle and Senator Rich Funke announced that the Governor recently signed legislation into law ([A. 05133C](#)) that will provide for an increase to disability benefits received by volunteer firefighters and ambulance workers.

“Every day the brave men and women who make up New York’s volunteer firefighter and ambulance forces selflessly and courageously put themselves in harm’s way in the name of serving and protecting their communities,” **said Morelle.** “In turn, it is our duty to ensure that

these devoted individuals and their families receive the support and peace of mind they so rightly deserve. I am truly grateful to all of our volunteer first responders for their service and I thank the Governor, Senator Funke and my colleagues in the legislature for joining me in passing this important legislation.”

“At long last, volunteer heroes like Victor’s Mike Nicholson who were permanently injured in the line of duty will receive the common-sense compensation increase they deserve,” **said Funke**. “It’s possible that this law doesn’t become a reality without Mike, who made it his life’s mission to secure a fair cost of living adjustment for his fellow injured volunteer firefighters and EMS workers. I thank Mike for his advocacy and Governor Cuomo and Leader Morelle for their partnership in giving these brave first responders the support they’ve so rightfully earned.”

In New York State, volunteer firefighters and ambulance workers who are permanently disabled in the course of their service are eligible to receive workers’ compensation benefits of up to \$400 per week, regardless of the date of their injury. However, this amount has remained fixed for the past 18 years – failing to account for inflation and increases in the cost of living.

Recognizing that inflationary forces make it increasingly difficult to subsist on a fixed income, this legislation institutes a cost-of-living adjustment for all disabled volunteer firefighters and ambulance workers. Adequately compensating the men and women, who day-in and day-out put their lives on the line to protect the safety of others, for their injuries incurred in the line of duty is the least we, as a State, can do to thank them for their service.

“FASNY thanks Governor Cuomo, Assemblyman Morelle, and State Senator Funke for their leadership on this critical issue,” **said Firemen’s Association of the State of New York (FASNY) President Ken Pienkowski**. “It has been too long since the benefit for permanently disabled

volunteer firefighters was increased and during this time the cost of living steadily rose. The passage of this bill will help to ensure that those who sacrificed their livelihoods in service to their communities have the help and assistance that they both need and deserve.”

The \$200 increase in benefits outlined in this bill shall apply to weekly benefit periods after January 1, 2017.