



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

Legislation co-sponsored by O'Mara to increase disability benefits for emergency services volunteers signed into law: O'Mara calls increase long overdue

THOMAS F. O'MARA November 23, 2016

| ISSUE: **VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS**



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Elmira, N.Y., November 23—Legislation co-sponsored by State Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats) to increase weekly benefits for permanently disabled volunteer firefighters and

ambulance workers has been signed into law by Governor Andrew Cuomo.

The legislation (**S1000/A5133, Chapter 401 of the Laws of 2016**) was unanimously approved by both houses of the Legislature in June.

“Our volunteer firefighters and ambulance workers make great sacrifices to protect the health, safety and well-being of lives and property throughout our communities. They deserve and they’ve earned the increased disability benefit this new law provides. It’s another way that we can express our gratitude for our emergency services volunteers and their families,” said O’Mara.

Prior to the law’s enactment, volunteer firefighters and ambulance workers who were permanently disabled in the line of duty were eligible to receive workers’ compensation benefits of up to \$400 per week. This benefit has remained fixed for the past 18 years. The new law recognizes that a cost-of-living adjustment for all permanently disabled volunteer firefighters and ambulance workers was long overdue and increases the disability benefit by \$200 per week beginning in January.

Firemen’s Association of the State of New York (FASNY) President Ken Pienkowski said, “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.”