



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

Senate approves legislation O'Mara co-sponsors to ensure volunteer firefighters have access to critical health care benefits; O'Mara urges Assembly action giving volunteer firefighters coverage for job-related cancer diagnoses (UPDATED)

THOMAS F. O'MARA January 24, 2017

| ISSUE: **VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS**



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Albany, N.Y., January 24—The State Senate today unanimously approved legislation co-sponsored by Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats) to extend critical health care benefits to

volunteer firefighters by ensuring expanded levels of protection for firefighters stricken with cancer attributable to their service as volunteers.

“Our volunteer firefighters 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 health care coverage this legislation would provide,” said O’Mara. “It’s the least we can do for our volunteer firefighters and their families, and I hope it will be approved by the Assembly this year.”

The legislation (**S1411/A711**) has received Senate approval for the past two legislative sessions but has not come to a vote in the Assembly. If enacted into law, it would expand the Volunteer Firefighters’ Benefit Law to provide presumptive cancer coverage to New York’s more than 100,000 volunteer firefighters.

Increasing numbers of firefighters are being diagnosed with cancer and recent medical studies have concluded that they are at a significantly higher risk for many types of cancers than the general population because of the high levels of carcinogens and other toxins they’re exposed to in burning buildings and the other hazardous environments that firefighters routinely encounter.

The legislation is the top priority for the **Firemen’s Association of the State of New York (FASNY)** in 2017.

FASNY President Ken Pienkowski said, “Presumptive cancer coverage for volunteer firefighters is unquestionably FASNY’s number-one priority for the 2017 legislative session. Thirty-five other states in the nation, most recently Ohio, have passed presumptive cancer legislation. Fully 89 percent of New York’s municipalities are protected by volunteer firefighters, who save the state approximately \$3 to \$4 billion each year, which is what it

would cost to maintain an all-paid fire service.”

[UPDATE: Read more from [syracuse.com](#), "**NY's volunteer firefighters need cancer coverage**"]