



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Protecting Those Who Protect Us

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Each and every day, volunteer firefighters put their lives at risk to protect communities—without thinking twice about entering smoke-filled buildings, or about the price they may pay for breathing toxic substances they encounter in the line of duty.

We owe a lot to the brave men and women who put their own personal health and safety on the line to protect us. That's why just recently, I was proud to join with my Senate colleagues in approving a measure to help further protect the health of volunteer firefighters who become sick due to the hazards they face while serving their communities.

The legislation (S.1411)—which has passed the Senate three years in a row—expands the benefits available to volunteer firefighters when they contract certain illnesses and cancers resulting from the dangerous work they do. In addition, it provides presumptive cancer coverage, meaning if a volunteer firefighter passed a physical when they entered fire service and did not show signs of cancer but developed cancer years later, it would be presumed that any covered cancers developing later in life are the result of duties related to fighting fires.

A recent National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) study suggests that firefighters are at a higher risk of cancers of the oral, digestive, respiratory and urinary systems due to the high levels of carcinogens and other toxins found in burning buildings and other hazardous situations they may encounter—making our efforts to protect their health even more important.

At all hours of the day and night, firefighters are ready to respond and come to the aid of those who need help. I am proud to continue to support the work they do to keep us safe, and hope that the Assembly will act on this measure to provide these heroes with the protections they deserve.