



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pamela Helming

Senator Helming Announces Signing of Cancer Benefits for Firefighters

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GENEVA – Senator Pam Helming today announced that legislation that she co-sponsored to create the New York State Volunteer Firefighter Gap Coverage Act was

signed into law by Governor Cuomo. This important legislation will provide volunteer firefighters who contract certain forms of cancer with enhanced disability benefits. Under current benefit law, a fully disabled firefighter is limited to \$600 a month in disability benefits. Senator Helming believes a gap coverage disability benefit is long overdue and will help volunteer firefighters offset some of the medical expenses.

“There has been increasing evidence in recent years linking certain types of cancer to firefighting. Paid firefighters already receive similar disability benefits, but volunteer firefighters who contract these horrible disease and their families end up taking on significant out-of-pocket expenses for cancer treatment. The fact is these courageous volunteers save the state billions of dollars through their service to local towns and villages, and it is about time that they are compensated for a risk they selflessly assume to protect our communities. I am pleased the Governor signed this critical legislation,” Senator Helming said.

A volunteer firefighter will be eligible for enhanced cancer disability benefits if the following criteria is met:

- The volunteer has served for at least five years as an interior firefighter and passed the mask fit test required of all volunteer firefighters with an interior firefighting rating;
- The volunteer firefighter successfully passed a physical examination; and
- The volunteer firefighter has a malignant growth or tumor affecting the lymphatic or hematologic systems or digestive, urinary, prostate, neurological, breast or reproductive systems or melanoma.

A volunteer who meets the eligibility requirements of the bill shall be eligible for the following disability benefits:

- For forms of cancer deemed medically serious, the volunteer firefighter will be eligible for a lump sum payment of \$25,000 and up to \$50,000 if there is more than one diagnosis over the volunteer firefighters’ lifetime;
- For forms of cancer deemed medically treatable, the volunteer firefighter will be eligible for a lump sum benefit of up to \$50,000 if there is more than one diagnosis over the volunteer firefighters’ lifetime.

If the volunteer firefighter is totally disabled, a monthly benefit of \$1,500 per month will be paid up to 36 consecutive monthly payments. In case of death, the volunteer

firefighters' family will be eligible for an accidental death benefit in the amount of \$50,000.

This law will go into effect on January 1, 2019.

Senator Helming represents the 54th Senate District, which consists of Seneca and Wayne Counties, parts of Cayuga and Ontario Counties, and the towns of Lansing and Webster. For more information, please visit Senator Helming's [website](#), or follow @SenatorHelming on Facebook or Twitter.

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