



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Monica R. Martinez

Raising the Alarm of First Responder Shortages

MONICA R. MARTINEZ February 2, 2024

| ISSUE: **VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTER RECRUITMENT, VOLUNTEER AMBULANCE, FIRST RESPONDERS, VOLUNTEER SHORTAGE, TAX INCENTIVE**

Senator Monica R. Martinez Announces Initiatives to Help Recruit new Volunteers

A day following the Firefighters Association of the State of New York's (FASNY) kickoff of its 15th annual **RecruitNY** statewide firefighter recruitment drive, New York State Senator Monica R. Martinez has announced a package of bills intended to help attract new volunteers into service. The pending legislation includes initiatives to:

- Increase volunteer firefighters' and ambulance workers' personal income tax credits from \$200 to \$800 for eligible individuals and from \$400 to \$1,600 for eligible married joint filers (**S7286**).
- Create a "Vets to Veggies"/Veterans to Volunteers program (**S8111**).
- Ensure the timely payment of death benefits for volunteer firefighters and volunteer ambulance workers (**S4711**).

On Thursday, FASNY was joined by representatives from the New York State Association of Fire Chiefs, the Association of Fire Districts of the State of New York, and the New York State Fire Coordinators Association to emphasize the vital role volunteers have within New York's emergency response infrastructure and to raise an alarm about the difficulties fire agencies on Long Island and across the state are having in recruiting new members.

According to FASNY, the volunteer firefighter ranks across the state have fallen by approximately 40,000 members during the past 20 years. Yesterday's kickoff also highlighted the results of a new survey FASNY conducted this month, showing New Yorkers' high regard for firefighters and emergency medical service professionals, with 98% of respondents agreeing that "Volunteer firefighters and emergency medical services are important for the health and safety of my community," and over 80% reporting they believe the cost savings associated with the state's volunteer firefighting forces were impactful or very impactful for taxpayers.

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"This critical call for new recruits is not a fire drill," said Senator Martinez. "A shortage of volunteers threatens response times and, by extension, public safety. We all know volunteers give of their time and of themselves – they miss time with family and friends, and miss important personal moments while out on calls, so without incentives, fewer and fewer are willing to make this sacrifice. Let's do what is needed to stamp out this crisis and pass all these important measures."

Should volunteer agencies need to become paid services, the impact on taxpayers would be enormous. According to Edward Tase, Jr., President of the New York State Firefighters Association, "To replace the volunteer firefighters, 80,000 of us in the state of New York, with career, paid firefighters would cost New York state an additional \$4.7 billion in taxes."

Senator Martinez's announcement comes the same week she joined the New York State Association of Counties to help "[Rescue EMS](#)." Similar to the recruitment and retention issues confronting fire agencies, Emergency Medical Services providers across the state are reporting longer and longer response times due to a lack of volunteers and funding shortfalls that threaten to flatline the entire system.

2023-S7286

- Introduced
- - In Committee Assembly
 - In Committee Senate
- - On Floor Calendar Assembly
 - On Floor Calendar Senate
- - Passed Assembly
 - Passed Senate
- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor
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Relates to tax credits for volunteer firefighters and volunteer ambulance workers

May 19, 2023

In Assembly Committee

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Do you support this bill?

2023-S8111

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- Introduced
 - ◦ In Committee Assembly
 - In Committee Senate
 - ◦ On Floor Calendar Assembly
 - On Floor Calendar Senate
 - ◦ Passed Assembly
 - Passed Senate
 - Delivered to Governor
 - Signed By Governor
 -

Establishes the "Vets to Veggies" program

January 08, 2024

In Senate Committee [Veterans, Homeland Security and Military Affairs](#)

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Do you support this bill?

2023-S4711

- Introduced

- ◦ In Committee Assembly
 - In Committee Senate

- ◦ On Floor Calendar Assembly
 - On Floor Calendar Senate

- ◦ Passed Assembly
 - Passed Senate

- Delivered to Governor

- Signed By Governor

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Establishes the payment of certain volunteer firefighter and volunteer ambulance worker death benefits shall be within ninety days of the filing of application to receive such death benefit

February 13, 2023

In Assembly Committee

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Do you support this bill?