



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Neil D. Breslin

Breslin Bill Qualifies Volunteer Firefighters and Ambulance Workers for More Affordable Health Insurance

NEIL D. BRESLIN February 9, 2010

| ISSUE: **INSURANCE**

For Immediate Release: February 9, 2010

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(Albany, NY) – The New York State Senate recently passed legislation (S5111) sponsored by Senator Neil D. Breslin (D-Delmar), Chair of the Insurance Committee, which recognizes and rewards men and women who volunteer in their local fire or ambulance companies by permitting any public corporation to extend health services and insurance to volunteer firefighters and ambulance workers.

“Volunteer firefighters and ambulance workers provide a valuable service to their communities and it is appropriate that their public service be recognized” said Senator Breslin. This act will allow volunteers – many of whom are without insurance or paying very expensive premiums– to receive affordable coverage through their municipality, including those local governmental entities offering their employers health insurance through the New York State Health Insurance Plan (NYSHIP.) Currently, NYSHIP is offered in approximately 900 municipalities across the state.

Volunteer firefighters make up the largest number of firefighters in New York State. According to the Office of Fire and Prevention in 2009 there were approximately 96,000 volunteer firefighters in New York State compared to 18,500 career firefighters. Senator Breslin concluded, "Some fire departments and districts are facing recruitment shortages, this law would assist in recruiting men and women who wish to serve their communities, and help keep health care affordable."

The bill is currently awaiting action from the Assembly.

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