



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Brian X. Foley

## Senator Foley Makes It Easier for Volunteers to Protect Communities

BRIAN X. FOLEY May 25, 2010

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Senator Brian X. Foley (D – Blue Point) celebrated the senate’s passage of legislation (S4988) that will protect volunteer firefighters and emergency workers from losing their jobs when they miss work while responding to emergencies.

Under this legislation, employers would have to allow volunteer firefighters and emergency workers to use vacation, sick, personal or any other type of leave time they have accrued to cover the time they miss while engaged in the actual performance of volunteer duties, including travel to and from the emergency. Volunteers who do not have remaining leave time may, at the discretion of their employer, be granted at least three hours of authorized absence or at least two authorized absences for volunteer response during work hours, each to be spread over a twelve-month period. Upon request from the employer, the volunteer must present a note from the head of the fire department or ambulance company confirming that the employee responded to an emergency.

“This legislation will allow all New York residents to breathe a sigh of relief, knowing that the volunteers they count on to protect their homes and assist loved ones will not have to choose between keeping their job and saving a life,” said Senator Foley. “Volunteer

firefighters and emergency workers are critical, especially here on Long Island, where they are the sole means of emergency response for most communities. Now, these brave men and women will be able to help their neighbors without at the same time worrying that their day jobs will be gone when they return.”

“This legislation that passed the Senate unanimously on Monday, has been pursued by the Firemen’s Association of the State of New York for several years” said David Jacobowitz, incoming FASNY President, “and this legislation has been a personal passion of mine because the threat of losing a job has a chilling effect on response at a time when more than 80 percent of New York State’s geography is covered by volunteer response. Volunteers are frontline first responders that cannot be replaced without enormous cost to local governments at a time when the State is in the throes of a budget crisis”, continued Jacobowitz, who expressed “a debt of gratitude to Senator Foley from volunteers statewide.”

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“The fact that this legislation was passed by the senate with broad bipartisan support is a testament to its importance,” said Senator Foley. “We all recognize the need for our volunteers to be able to respond to emergencies and to be able to devote their full, undivided attention to the situation at hand.”