



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Daniel L. Squadron

Elected Officials, FDNY, Community Leaders, Families of Fallen Firefighters Urge Governor to Sign Legislation to Avoid Tragedies Like Deutsche Bank Fire

DANIEL L. SQUADRON July 22, 2010

Hundreds of Buildings in City Don't Comply With Building and Fire Codes

Legislation Would Create First-Ever City-State Coordination to Ensure all City Buildings are Safe for First Responders

New York, NY—Today, State Senator Daniel Squadron, Assembly Member Richard Gottfried, Council Member Margaret Chin, the Fire Department of New York, and community leaders stood with the families of Firefighters Joseph Graffagnino Jr. and Robert Beddia to urge the Governor to sign bill S5597B (Squadron)/A8407B (Gottfried), giving the State and City one year to create safer building conditions to avoid tragedies like the Deutsche Bank fire in August 2007. Under state law, buildings owned by the State and public authorities are not covered by the New York City building and fire codes, which means that among other gaps, first responders often do not have building plans on file when responding to emergencies. Among other issues, this has been cited as a factor that contributed to the tragedy that cost the lives of two firefighters, Joseph Graffagnino Jr. and Robert Beddia, at the Deutsche Bank building. The Deutsche Bank building, owned by the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, is one of hundreds of buildings around New York City excluded from NYC

building and fire codes.

Senator Squadron said, “Heroes like Joseph Graffagnino Jr. and Robert Beddia don’t blink before running into dangerous buildings to protect and save lives, and it is our job to do everything we can to protect them. This legislation will address gaps in fire and building safety regulations in hundreds of city buildings and ensure that our first responders have the tools they need to be safe in their jobs protecting us all. I strongly urge Governor Paterson to sign this bill into law.”

“State agencies and public authorities are exempt from New York City fires and building codes for their buildings in New York City,” said Assembly Member Richard N. Gottfried. “The City Fire and Buildings Departments agree that this is a serious hazard for New Yorkers and for our firefighters. For years, I have been the sponsor of bills that would make these buildings subject to the New York City codes.”

“This important legislation will help keep our firefighters and the public safe,” Fire Commissioner Salvatore J. Cassano said. “Holding every building in our city to the same safety standards makes sense. Our city just re-wrote the entire Building and Fire Code, bringing it up to date with extensive regulations designed to protect the public and our members. I look forward to working with the state and the Port Authority on this crucial issue, because I know safety is paramount for all of us.”

Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer said, “New York's building stock is the backbone of our urban infrastructure, and we must require regular building inspections to ensure the safety of residents, visitors, workers and first responders. My office has long called for greater transparency with regards to safety inspection records and partnered last year with the Port Authority in making public their annual inspection and conformance status reports. I applaud Senator Squadron, Assembly Member Gottfried, and Council

Member Chin for their leadership, and urge the Governor to sign this bill without delay.”

“This legislation represents an important step towards closing this dangerous loophole in our fire code - and working to ensure tragedies like the Deutsche Bank Fire never happen again,” Council Member Chin said. “We can never bring back Joseph Graffagnino Jr. and Robert Beddia. But we can make sure that in the future, firefighters have all the information they need about the buildings ahead of time. It just doesn't make any sense that buildings located in New York City, but owned by the State, aren't covered by New York City fire code. The task force created by this legislation will hopefully address these concerns and make our code more rational. I urge Governor Paterson to immediately sign this legislation into law so the task force can begin its work.”

Catherine McVay Hughes, Vice Chair of Manhattan Community Board 1, said, “Community Board 1 strongly urges Governor Paterson to sign the Joseph Graffagnino Jr. and Robert Beddia Law to create safer building conditions so that no more lives are needlessly lost. We thank Senator Squadron and Assembly Member Gottfried for championing this bill so that deadly lessons learned during the abatement and demolition of 130 Liberty can be implemented throughout the state.”

The legislation creates a joint city and state task force that will review city and state fire and building safety rules and formulate a blueprint for how to improve safety conditions at these buildings, to improve safety of New York's City's first responders and ensure that the most effective regulations are applied to state-owned or controlled buildings in the City.

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