



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

I Need Your Support for ‘Mark’s Law’

PATTY RITCHIE June 11, 2012

| ISSUE: **CRIME, LOCAL GOVERNMENT, HOMELAND SECURITY, FIREFIGHTERS, PARAMEDICS**

Ritchie Urges Citizens to **Sign Petition** to Support Firefighters, First Responders

“They took the Job and got it done, unsung Heroes every one:

They laid their Lives on the Line, Do or Die!”

-- from the Firefighter’s Creed

Every day, more than 150,000 emergency first responders across New York State—firefighters, paramedics, EMTs and others—are prepared to answer their neighbors’ calls for help, whether a fire, motor vehicle accident, medical or other emergency.

In so doing, they put their own lives on the line to protect our safety; and too often, they pay the ultimate price.

Taxpayers and local communities invest millions of dollars in state-of-the-art equipment, and these dedicated professionals devote hundreds of hours in lessons and training to improve their safety, and help even the odds to face inevitable danger.

But 911 calls rarely turn out as they are initially recorded, and first responders and firefighters across the country will tell you that the greatest risk comes from dangers they didn’t foresee.

Such was the case for 25-year-old Mark Davis, the Cape Vincent volunteer EMT who was gunned down while responding to a medical emergency in 2009.

And firefighter Lt. Brenda Cowan, who was shot and killed by a man who had just murdered his wife, then called 911 for help.

And firefighter Ryan Hummert, who was ambushed by a gunman just as he exited his truck to battle a car fire.

There was a time when bad guys wouldn’t think of hurting one of these heroes. But across America each year, there are 700,000 assaults on firefighters and first responders. Surprisingly, a disproportionate number involve members of small and rural—not big city—departments.

And since 1990, over 20 of these attacks have ended in tragedy.

Nearly every state in the nation has laws that provide increased penalties for assaulting a firefighter or first responder, including New York: Penal Law section 120 nearly doubles the penalty when the victim is an on-duty “peace officer, police officer, fireman or emergency medical services professional.”

But New York’s law currently doesn’t provide that added level of protection in the case of murder. That’s why I introduced “Mark’s Law” (S.4717-B), a measure that provides the toughest penalty allowed—life imprisonment without parole—for the killing of a firefighter or first responder.

*** [CLICK HERE TO SIGN THE 'MARK'S LAW' PETITION](#) ***

The Senate passed “Mark’s Law” with wide bipartisan support last month, and with Mark Davis’ mother, sister, brother and father looking down from the Senate Gallery.

Mark’s mother later commented to me how proud and pleased her son would be, and expressed her hope that he was watching that day as well to see the measure named in his honor come one step closer to becoming law.

But resistance from downstate lawmakers to the tougher penalties in “Mark’s Law” may spell its doom in the state Assembly.

That’s just wrong.

Mark Davis gave his all for the community he loved. And his fellow firefighters and first responders—those who run in when others are running out—continue to put their neighbors and communities before themselves.

Can’t we repay them by giving them all the protection the law allows?

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Tell the Assembly that we shouldn’t have to wait for another victim of violence before we do the right thing, and make “Mark’s Law” a reality in New York.