



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Daniel L. Squadron

Squadron, Gottfried, Firefighters Urge Immediate Closure of Major Gaps in Safety Code at Hundreds of State-Owned Buildings Around City

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Squadron-Gottfried Legislation Created Task Force to Avoid Tragedies Like Deutsche Bank Fire; Now as Council Holds Hearing, Recommendations Must be Acted On

Squadron, Gottfried: Every Day We Don't Act Means Another Day Lives May Be at Risk

NEW YORK -- State Senator Daniel Squadron, Assemblyman Richard Gottfried and firefighters urged immediate action to close major gaps in the fire and safety codes at

hundreds of State-owned buildings around New York City, today outside the scene of the tragic Deutsche Bank fire.

Squadron and Gottfried passed legislation to create a joint New York City - New York State Task Force on Building and Fire Safety following the August 2007 fire, which claimed the lives of FDNY firefighters Joseph Graffagnino, Jr. and Robert Beddia. This summer the Task Force released its report, which underscores the discrepancies in codes that allow State-owned buildings to NYC to remain exempt from critical standards (likely a factor in the 2007 tragedy) and sets forth important recommendations to close the gaps. Squadron and Gottfried are urging immediate implementation of the recommendations.

Squadron and Gottfried will testify at a City Council hearing on the report this afternoon.

[Squadron's testimony is available here.](#) In July, Squadron sent a letter to FDNY Commissioner Sal Cassano and State Homeland Security and Emergency Services Commissioner Jerome Hauer urging immediate implementation of the report's critical recommendations.

The hundreds of State-owned buildings at risk throughout New York City include a number of buildings at SUNY and CUNY; the Jacob Javits Convention Center; Downstate Medical Center; and various State office buildings and facilities, including buildings that are leased out to commercial tenants like restaurants and salons. A full list can be found in the report.

"We must do everything possible to protect our first responders when they're out there protecting us. Every day we don't act means another day in which the lives of our first responders and the public may be at risk," said Senator Squadron, Senate sponsor of the bill that created the Task Force. "The Task Force's recommendations will be a big step toward closing these major gaps in our code, and they must be implemented now, as a step toward getting all these buildings under the City code. Thank you to Assemblyman Gottfried, and to

Commissioners Cassano and Hauer and the entire Task Force for their comprehensive report. Now let's make these critical recommendations a reality."

"The State-City Task Force has acknowledged serious safety problems that need to be corrected. However, it is distressing that these problems persist more than a decade after 9/11," said Assembly Member Richard N. Gottfried, Assembly sponsor of the bill that created the Task Force. "The Task Force recommendations should be adopted and implemented as quickly as possible. But we need to go further and give New York City building and fire code jurisdiction over State buildings within the five boroughs."

"Safety should be everyone's main priority, for our first responders and for all New Yorkers. Buildings must be inspected, building and fire codes violations must be corrected, and this report's recommendations must be implemented now. Building safety is taken for granted because it is assumed that the work environment is safe, when it may not be. Our first responders and all New Yorkers are the ones who pay the price," said Joseph Graffagnino, whose son, Joseph Jr., was one of the two firefighters killed in the 2007 Deutsche Bank fire.

"Our members need to know that as many protections as possible are in place when they head into harm's way. It's time to quickly implement the task force's recommendations so that our first responders are not put at even greater risk," said Captain Al Hagan, President of the Uniformed Fire Officers Association (UFOA). Needless to say, without these safeguards, the risk to the civilians, who we've sworn to protect is even greater. We are always mindful that those most likely to suffer the ravages of fire are the very young and the very old. Thank you to Senator Squadron and Assemblymember Gottfried for their leadership, and to the task force for this report."

Specifically, Squadron and Gottfried are calling on the City and State to:

- Create consistent standards for equipment in the building, such as standpipes and hosethread connections.
- Ensure that hazardous materials and explosives are properly reported.
- Ensure that our first responders have the critical information they need when they arrive at the scene of an emergency, which means the State must regularly update the FDNY on building layout, construction, and other changes.
- Notify affected tenants and businesses now so they have adequate time to comply with the recommendations.

[The Task Force's full report is available here.](#)

“I applaud Senator Squadron and Assemblymember Gottfried for spearheading the legislation mandating the joint New York City - New York State Task Force on Building and Fire Safety,” said New York State Senator Tom Duane. “The Task Force, led by Commissioners Cassano and Hauer, confirmed our worst fears but provided a roadmap for bringing state-owned buildings up to City fire safety standards. However, the report will only be worth the paper it is printed on if swift and decisive action is taken to implement the recommendations and fix the serious problems outlined. In my 14 years in Albany I have seen time and time again task forces and reports that sound good but are never acted upon. The stakes are too high in this instance to ignore these findings.”

“Alongside Senator Squadron, CB1 calls for the State and City to implement the recommendations of the the report now,” said Catherine McVay-Hughes, Chairperson of Manhattan Community Board 1. “We have seen firsthand what happened as a result of the major gaps in the building and fire safety code that put our first responders and the public at risk.

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