



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

Griffo Calls Upon Governor To Budget \$100 Million In Funding For Struggling Fire Departments

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO January 12, 2016

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State Senator Joseph Griffo is calling upon the Governor to include in this year's State Budget at least \$100 million in grant funding to help support financially struggling fire departments across the state.

As Governor Andrew Cuomo has already announced each day a variety of funding proposals in advance of his Budget Address this week for a number of concepts in communities across

New York State, Senator Griffo on Tuesday said he believes the Governor should direct some of that generosity toward the volunteer and paid firefighters who are among those that need help most.

“Many volunteer fire departments across New York State are desperately struggling to attract new recruits to their ranks, while also searching out any funds to help maintain the equipment and training necessary to protect their firefighters,” said Senator Griffo, R-Rome. “At the same time, many local governments with paid fire departments are facing significant fiscal challenges to maintain their services. Since Governor Cuomo seems to have numerous pots of money available to spend on initiatives that he believes will be beneficial to the state, accordingly I would encourage him to also consider using that money to help our brave firefighters do their job as safely and as effectively as possible.”

Senator Griffo’s proposed **Firefighter Investment, Retention & Equipment grant program – or FIRE** – would create a pool of \$100 million that would be available for those volunteer and paid fire departments most in need – split \$50 million for volunteer departments and \$50 million for paid departments. Each department would be invited to apply for this funding by stating their needs, and then each grant would be awarded through the New York State Office of Fire Prevention and Control. The FIRE grant program would mirror the various federal grant programs that are currently available through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), which includes assistance to firefighters, staffing for adequate responses and construction funding. These new state funds are necessary, however, because FEMA funding is limited in what it can adequately address, Senator Griffo said, and so the new FIRE grants could be divided proportionately among volunteer and paid departments in New York State to help invest in capital, equipment and training.

There are 1,786 fire departments across New York State, with more than 96,000 volunteers and 18,500 career firefighters. Volunteer fire departments, in particular – totaling 1,693 –

provide a significant service to those rural and suburban communities that do not have paid professionals, Senator Griffo said. But as necessary equipment becomes more expensive, as the number of required training hours has increased and as the demands of fundraising are taking up more time, many volunteer fire departments find themselves pressured to address all of these needs while also remaining focused on their priority of public safety.

“Our firefighters have proven time and time again that they will do whatever it takes to protect property and save lives,” Senator Griffo explained. “These selfless men and women push themselves to the limit, and we are grateful for it. But in reality, our fire departments are facing many challenges and struggles, so it is appropriate that we as a state do whatever we can to ensure that these departments have what they need to expand their ranks and keep our people and communities safe.”

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