



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Terrence Murphy

Senator Murphy Sponsors Bill To Give Greater Health Protections To Volunteer Firefighters

TERRENCE MURPHY January 24, 2017

| ISSUE: **VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS**



ALBANY, NY – Running headlong into a burning building can be hazardous enough, but volunteer firefighters fighting debilitating illnesses have found that battling a health crisis with limited medical coverage can be just as daunting. In the interest of taking care of the people who serve our community, Senators Terrence Murphy and Joseph Griffo have co-sponsored legislation to further protect the health of volunteer firefighters when they become sick due to their hazardous line of work. The bill, (S1411) passed today by the Senate,

expands the benefits available to volunteer firefighters when they contract certain illnesses and cancers while serving the community.

“There has been very little attention given to the heroic volunteer firefighters who risk their lives to help protect us,” said Senator Murphy. “Whether paid or volunteer, our brave firefighters face occupational and health risks when coming to our rescue. They suffer just as much when they are struck down by a devastating illness. We have to do the right thing by recognizing their selfless devotion to our communities and do all we can to assist them when they need a helping hand to get well.”

Senator Griffo said, “It is heartbreaking to see these volunteer firefighters and their families experience so much suffering while coping with cancer, after all they sacrificed to protect our homes and lives from devastating fires. These selfless men and women in our communities volunteer for the fire service for all the right reasons because they want to keep us safe, without ever imagining the price they may pay years later after being exposed to such toxic substances. I am proud to have pushed for this legislation in the Senate on behalf of all our volunteer firefighters, and I hope that the Assembly and Governor will finally join us in providing these volunteers with the support and protections they deserve.”

Overexposure to smoke increases the risk of contracting cancer of the lungs, but may also cause cancer in an individual's esophagus, stomach, blood, intestines, and even the brain. A National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) study suggests firefighters are at higher risk of cancers of the digestive, oral, respiratory, and urinary systems when compared to the rest of the general population, citing exposure to asbestos as a possible factor.

This legislation expands the existing coverage available under the Volunteer Firefighters Benefit Law to include cancer of the digestive, hematological, lymphatic, urinary, prostate,

neurological, breast and reproductive systems or melanoma.

The bill has been sent to the Assembly.