



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Anna M. Kaplan

## Lawmakers Announce the Inclusion of the EMS Cost Recovery Act in the NYS Budget

SENATOR JOHN BROOKS April 13, 2022

| ISSUE: EMS COST RECOVERY ACT, EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES, AMBULANCES, FIRE DEPARTMENTS, 2022-2023 BUDGET



East Farmingdale, NY – Earlier today, Senator John E. Brooks, Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone, Senator Anna Kaplan, Assemblymembers Fred Thiele and Steve Stern, and various state and local volunteer Firefighter organizations came together at the East Farmingdale Fire Department to announce the inclusion of the EMS Cost Recovery Act (Senate Bill S7186A) in the NY State Budget; and discuss its implications for volunteer emergency services across the state. Put simply, the EMS Cost Recovery Act allows allows volunteer fire departments to recover costs for emergency medical services (EMS) rendered.

Ambulance services affiliated with fire departments make up 46% of all ambulance services in the state of New York and account for over \$100 million annually in denied cost recovery revenue that is then passed down to taxpayers. Previously, volunteer emergency medical services that operate as part of volunteer fire departments were not able to charge insurance companies, Medicare, or Medicaid for their ambulance services. They have therefore been forced to recoup those expenses in their taxpayer-funded budgets.

During the COVID-19 pandemic the cost of providing emergency medical services skyrocketed at an exponential rate. This increase has placed even more of a burden on volunteer fire departments already struggling to cover EMS costs, leading many to stop offering ambulatory services altogether. Funded primarily through existing fire taxes, departments could not afford to continue providing critical emergency services without raising people's taxes.

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*Senator Anna M. Kaplan said, “Our volunteer fire departments are always there for us when we need them, no matter what; so I was proud to show up for them by supporting the inclusion of the EMS Cost Recovery Act in this year’s state budget. For too long, our volunteer fire departments have been treated unfairly when it comes to recovering costs for the services they provide, benefiting the big insurance companies at the expense of the taxpayers. With this simple, and long overdue legislation, we’re standing up for our volunteer EMS and our taxpayers, and I want to thank Senator John Brooks for leading the way. To all of our first responders: thank you for your service.”*

"As a volunteer firefighter and former department chief, this issue hits close to home," said **Senator Brooks**. "I want all of our fire departments to be able to provide the services necessary to keep the residents of New York safe while also making sure that it is affordable for the departments. Emergency medical services are more important than ever right now, and ensuring that there is widespread access to these services is key in maintaining the

public health of New York State."

When volunteer fire departments have to turn to taxpayer funding for services that would otherwise be covered by insurance, it can affect their ability to procure necessary personnel, equipment, and supplies. This legislation provides over \$100 million in local property tax relief across the state by shifting the funding for these services from the taxpayer to the insurance company. Premiums will not be raised since insurance companies already provide for these costs when charged.

"We know that the cost of operating ambulatory services is high and has only increased since the pandemic. The EMS Cost Recovery Act is about ensuring the sustainability of our volunteer EMS services," said **Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone**. "I want to thank Senator Brooks and all of those who fought for our volunteer fire departments to be able to bill for their ambulance services, which will ultimately protect local taxpayers."

With the passing of this legislation into law, New York will join every other state in allowing cost recovery for volunteer fire department emergency medical services. The additional revenue available should allow fire departments that stopped offering ambulance services due to the high operating costs to reinstate these services.

**Assemblymember Fred Thiele** said, "With the EMS Cost Recovery Act now in law, our fire departments can now join the rest of the country and fairly bill for the EMS services that sustain the health and wellbeing of our communities. With this funding, departments can fully invest in the resources required to maintain EMS services I was proud to support this Act brought forth by Senator Brooks and Assemblymember Jones in the Assembly Local Governments Committee and in this historic budget. I'm grateful for the decades of outstanding leadership and unrelenting advocacy that has brought us here today and look forward to the tremendous benefits this measure will provide New Yorkers."

**Assemblyman Steve Stern** said, “Our volunteer firefighters are the heroes of our community. That is why I was so proud to partner with Senator John Brooks to pass this critically important legislation to help our local volunteer fire departments recover the costs associated with emergency ambulance response calls. This long overdue cost recovery initiative will provide Suffolk County residents with nearly \$50 million in local property tax relief – the largest savings of any county in New York State. As a result, exorbitant emergency response costs will no longer be a burden solely on taxpayers and vital funding can now be invested back into our local volunteer fire departments who have been struggling with rising expenses, particularly during these challenging times. Thank you to all of the outstanding men and women first responders, who are our neighbors, whose passionate advocacy for this legislation was critical to its passage.”

**Matthew Aracich, President of the Building and Construction Trades Council of Nassau and Suffolk Counties** said, "The Building and Construction Trades Council of Nassau and Suffolk Counties represents 65,000 members across Long Island, many of whom are volunteer firefighters. The EMS Cost Recovery Act will both provide our volunteer fire departments with an easier route to recap expenses and save taxpayers money. Volunteer fire departments and their members serve as a valuable part of our community, and I am proud to have played a supporting role in getting this new law passed. Volunteer firefighters and members of the ambulance corps are selfless individuals who are always there to answer our calls day or night."

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RELATED LEGISLATION

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**2021-S7186A**

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- Introduced
  
  - ◦ In Committee Assembly
    - In Committee Senate
  
  - ◦ On Floor Calendar Assembly
    - On Floor Calendar Senate
  
  - ◦ Passed Assembly
    - Passed Senate
  
  - Delivered to Governor
  
  - Signed By Governor
  
  -

Provides that authorities having control of a fire department or fire company which provides emergency medical services may establish fees and charges for services

June 04, 2021

In Assembly Committee

Sponsored by **John E. Brooks**

Do you support this bill?