

NYS LEGISLATION PROPOSED TO INCREASE VOLUNTEER INCENTIVES

Assemblyman Phil Goldfeder (D-Rockaway, Queens County) announced on 2/19/12 that he is sponsoring legislation ([A.7154](#)), that is aimed at recruiting and retaining volunteer first responders.

"Southern Queens and Rockaway has the highest number of volunteer firefighters and of volunteer ambulance companies in all of New York City and this legislation will put these dedicated volunteers first - as they so often put the safety of our families first," said Assemblyman Goldfeder. "It is becoming harder and harder to recruit and retain volunteer first responders and creating quality incentives is the right thing to do."

This bill provides money-saving opportunities, cash incentives and help paying for higher education to all volunteer first responders by:

- Providing a \$400 state income tax credit for volunteer firefighters and ambulance workers who have been active for at least four consecutive years;
- Exempting motor vehicles owned by volunteer first responders and used in the performance of duty from motor vehicle registration fees and vehicle use taxes;
- Authorizing local volunteer fire and ambulance companies to offset the cost of health insurance for their volunteers through the use of funds collected annually through a 2 percent fire insurance premium tax from out-of-state insurers;
- Increasing the number of candidates - from one to three - that volunteer companies can submit for participation in New York's college tuition assistance program "Volunteer Recruitment Service Scholarships"; and
- Directing the state Higher Education Services Corporation (HESC) to create a volunteer recruitment service college loan forgiveness program.

"This bill recognizes the great work of our volunteer first responders who put their lives on the line everyday to protect our communities," said Assemblyman Goldfeder. "These volunteers are the backbone of our community and they should be recognized as such." Volunteer first responders comprise 72 percent of all firefighters in the United States. The services contributed by these volunteers save localities throughout the nation approximately \$37.2 billion per year