

FASNY is asking everyone to contact their local legislators regarding bills S.6806 (Part U) and A.9806 (Part U). This bill would allow for dissolution or consolidation with petitions signed by just 10% of the residents of the area. Currently a much larger number of signatures is required. This bill would also shift control of local fire companies to the Town Board who usually know little about fire protection. NYSAFC is also expressing concern over this bill.

Attached is a letter which they are asking all firefighters and fire companies to send to your state representatives asking them to reject this legislation.

(If you cannot open the attachment, please cut & paste the letter below, put your name and address (or fire company name & letterhead) at the top, sign and mail.

Or cut & paste, fill in your name & e-mail to your state representatives:

Senator Thomas Libous, Senator@senatorlibous.com

Assemblywomen Donna Lupardo, lupardod@assembly.state.ny.us

Assemblyman Clifford Crouch crouchc@assembly.state.ny.us

Assemblyman Gary Finch finchg@assembly.state.ny.us

Text of the letter is attached or cut and past the following:

[YOUR LETTERHEAD]

February 28, 2008

Memorandum in Opposition

S.6806 (Part U) A.9806 (Part U)

The Firemen's Association of the State of New York (FASNY) strongly opposes this legislation. [Insert your name, district or department]

Provisions in Part U of S.6806/A.9806 establish a new Article 17-a of the General Municipal Law. This new Article would alter the process and requirements for consolidation and/or dissolution of fire districts and fire protection districts. The proposed modifications are substantial and would have severe unintended consequences, particularly if such changes are required on a statewide basis.

Currently, fire district consolidation issues are considered by town boards when a large number of real property taxpayers in the district file a petition. The ability to file the petition rests with the real property taxpayers since they are the individuals that pay the taxes needed to operate fire districts and fire protection districts. Article 17-a would change this drastically by allowing consolidation and dissolution matters to be considered when just 10% of registered voters file a petition. This approach in Article 17-a is not suitable since it greatly reduces the number of signatures required to file the petition and takes the ability to file the petition out of the hands of the local real property taxpayers.

Article 17-a would also shift control of local volunteer fire companies to Town Boards. This is a problem since Town Boards typically focus on issues other than fire protection and, consequently, do not have the expertise with fire issues that Fire Districts possess. This is also a problem because volunteer firefighters have a personal and direct connection with their fire company and fire district – not with the Town Board. Consequently, many volunteers may not want to volunteer in that changed environment. There are approximately 100,000 volunteer firefighters in NYS and they provide fire protection to over 80% of the State. The volunteer fire service in NYS saves taxpayers roughly \$7 billion per year. The drastic changes in Article 17-a can negatively affect these numbers.

The current fire district consolidation and dissolution system works. There are over 800 fire districts throughout the State which, in total, consume less than 1% of the State's tax revenue. The changes proposed in Article 17-a will disrupt this system. Forcing these changes onto the

volunteer fire service statewide when local remedies are possible will have a negative impact on the volunteer fire service.

For these reasons, FASNY [your name, district or department] strongly opposes this legislation.