

# BROOME COUNTY FIREFIGHTERS' ASSOCIATION

BROOME COUNTY, NEW YORK

## **Firemen's Association of the State of New York Secures \$4.2 Million in Federal Funding for its Comprehensive Volunteer Firefighter Recruitment & Retention Program**

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### *New York State's Volunteer Fire Service Awarded SAFER Grant*

1. (NEW YORK) – On May 11, the Firemen's Association of the State of New York (FASNY) announced that it was awarded a \$4,270,570 U.S. Department of Homeland Security Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant. FASNY will help strengthen the response of fire departments throughout the state by promoting and maintaining adequate Volunteer Firefighter staffing. FASNY will allocate the funding to its multi-pronged firefighter recruitment and retention effort.

FASNY, under the leadership of President David Jacobowitz, worked with U.S. Senator Charles E. Schumer and U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand to secure the statewide SAFER grant. For several years, FASNY has been advocating to implement a much-needed statewide volunteer firefighter recruitment and retention program.

“On behalf of FASNY and the entire volunteer fire service, we are thrilled to be the recipient of this grant,” said FASNY President Jacobowitz. “Firefighter recruitment and retention are of utmost importance to our organization and applying for this funding was a top priority for us. It is critical that our volunteer fire departments have the volunteers and tools necessary, so they can continue to provide the optimal level of fire and emergency assistance to the citizens in their communities in a cost-effective manner.”

FASNY's goal is to attract and maintain 15,189 new firefighters over the next four years. In order to meet this objective, the association will promote regional awareness of the volunteer fire service by sponsoring a large-scale public awareness campaign. In addition, FASNY seeks to develop the appropriate tools, training and resources that individual departments could utilize for recruitment and retention efforts that would be tailored to departments' local circumstances and needs. FASNY intends to oversee statewide efforts, develop messaging and media materials managed by the statewide volunteer representatives serving on the Recruitment and Retention Committee. Most importantly, during these difficult economic times, a college tuition reimbursement plan for eligible volunteer firefighters attending any of New York's community colleges in return for a service commitment to the student/volunteer's local fire department serves as the centerpiece of the award.

In recent years, New York's volunteer fire departments have struggled to recruit and retain members in a weakened economy, ever growing numbers of double-income families, and aging communities. FASNY President Jacobowitz said, “We fully realize the needs of volunteer fire service across the state and are confident that our over 100 years of experience and continued support of all the New York State Fire Service Organizations will produce a nationally significant recruitment and retention effort to turn the declining volunteer fire department membership numbers around.”

The latest available statewide studies show that if all fire protective services now provided by volunteers were funded by taxpayers, it would add approximately \$2.8 billion in pay and benefits, firefighter equipment, and general operations costs per year.

"This federal money will help FASNY launch a critical campaign to recruit and train thousands of new firefighters over the next four years," said Senator Schumer. "These funds will guarantee that fire departments throughout New York are well-staffed, and capable of quickly and safely responding to emergencies. The people of New York can sleep easier tonight knowing that their volunteer fire departments have additional resources to continue their life-saving work."

"This is a great investment for New York," **Senator Gillibrand** said. "This federal investment will help improve the ability of New York's fire departments to respond and keep our families safe. I will continue working to ensure our first responders have the tools and resources they need to keep our communities safe."

FASNY will help guide and coordinate regional strategies for volunteer fire departments throughout the state and save time, money and the enormous task of applying and administering a patchwork of smaller individual SAFER grants. In addition, a statewide recruitment and retention plan will help departments avoid wasteful duplication.

Based upon best-practices from past SAFER Grants, FASNY plans to mirror Rockland County's successful Tuition Re-imbursment Program providing more than 2,200 student/volunteers the opportunity to further their personal education. By only offering the retention effort to a community college within a 50-mile radius, it not only offers an introduction to higher education with the most major choices, but improves public safety due to the likelihood of the student/volunteer living within the fire district he/she serves.

The New York State volunteer fire service described in the SAFER Grant application covers an area of 47,214 sq. miles and protects 9.8 million people through 1,740 volunteer fire agencies served by 88,841 firefighters.

#### ***About FASNY***

*Founded in 1872, the Firemen's Association of the State of New York (FASNY) represents the interests of the more than 130,000 volunteer firefighters and emergency medical personnel in New York State. For more information, visit [www.fasny.com](http://www.fasny.com).*