

BROOME COUNTY FIREFIGHTERS' ASSOCIATION

BROOME COUNTY, NEW YORK

GOVERNOR SIGNS BILL TO ENSURE FALLEN FIREFIGHTERS ARE RECOGNIZED ON NEW YORK MONUMENT

July 12, 2012- Today, Governor Andrew Cuomo has signed into law legislation that would ensure that fallen firefighters who died in the line of duty would be placed on the Fire Fighter Memorial Wall in Albany. The legislation was designed to simplify the procedures in place that evaluated the selection of candidates for Memorial Recognition. This bill relies on Worker Compensation and Public Safety Officers Benefit law parameters to determine if a Firefighter died in the line of duty, received benefits, and therefore would be properly recognized on the Wall. The legislation, sponsored by Assemblyman Harvey Weisenberg and Senator Dean Skelos, addressed a key item on FASNY's legislative agenda for the past six years, and FASNY President David Jacobowitz commented that, "All of FASNY's members are extremely gratified by the actions of the Legislature and Governor in making this bill a law because the intrepid Firefighters who die while responding, and their families, deserve recognition without question for their actions".

Previous law allowed recognition on the Memorial Wall based on peer evaluation that emphasized actual heroic activities while in the burning building. FASNY's established position has been that a line of duty death, adjudicated so by the State's Worker Compensation system, was an impartial way to properly bestow recognition. This legislation accomplishes that impartial review process and subjects the volunteer and professional firefighters to the same criteria for inclusion on the Wall.

This legislation allows for the name of Malverne volunteer firefighter Paul Brady name to be added to the firefighter memorial wall in Albany.

Brady, who was killed in a work-related accident in 2006, had been rejected for inclusion on the wall four times by the committee that oversees the New York State Fallen Firefighters Memorial. With the passage of the new law, this committee will no longer make determinations on names for the monument.

The new law allows any firefighter who dies to be included on the New York State Fallen Firefighter Memorial if the death is recognized as being in the line of duty by an "authoritative agency." Brady's death was determined to be in the line of duty by the state Workers' Compensation Board, U.S. Department of Justice and National Fallen Firefighters Foundation.

"Paul Brady is being honored like all the others were honored and he's being recognized or acknowledged as dying as a hero," said Assemb. Harvey Weisenberg (D-Long Beach), who pushed for the legislation for years. Including all firefighters' names on the wall is "significant to the survivors of their families," he said.

Brady's widow, Lisa Brady, spent Thursday on the phone spreading the news to friends and family. "I'm absolutely thrilled. It truly hasn't sunk in yet," Brady, 53, said in a telephone interview from Pittsburgh, where she now lives. "Paul deserves to be honored."

The end of a nearly six-year fight for recognition means that people can now focus on

remembering how he lived his life rather than his death, she said. "It's been an open wound because it's bad enough losing someone you love in such a horrible way, but then to have people say it wasn't line of duty when it clearly was," she said. "Finally as a family we can begin to heal."

More than 2,300 names have been engraved on the memorial wall in the Empire State Plaza since it was dedicated in 1999. Weisenberg said Brady's name will go on the wall in October.

Brady, 42, had been working on top of a Malverne Fire Department truck in the firehouse when a colleague drove it out without realizing he was there. He was crushed between the vehicle and a ceiling beam.

When Brady was rejected in 2010, Newsday reported that committee members didn't consider his death to be in the line of duty even though others had been approved for deaths in accidents, for heart attacks and while serving in Iraq.

Weisenberg said the rejections exposed a rift between paid firefighters and volunteers.

The bill Cuomo signed includes full-time professionals and volunteers.