

110TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 3237

To assist volunteer fire companies in coping with the precipitous rise in fuel prices.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JULY 10 (legislative day, JULY 9), 2008

Mr. CASEY (for himself, Mr. SANDERS, and Ms. MIKULSKI) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs

A BILL

To assist volunteer fire companies in coping with the precipitous rise in fuel prices.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Supporting America’s
5 Volunteer Emergency Services Act of 2008”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

8 (1) According to the Federal Emergency Man-
9 agement Administration, in 2006 there were—

1 (A) 807,150 volunteer firefighters, nearly
2 73 percent of all active firefighters; and

3 (B) 19,915 all-volunteer fire companies na-
4 tionwide, servicing 22.6 percent of the popu-
5 lation of the United States and 4,105 compa-
6 nies comprised of a majority of volunteers, serv-
7 icing 16.3 percent of the population of the
8 United States.

9 (2) These volunteer companies, especially those
10 serving communities of fewer than 5,000 residents,
11 rely heavily upon fund-raising efforts and other po-
12 tentially unreliable sources of funding for their basic
13 operating expenses.

14 (3) According to the Energy Information Ad-
15 ministration, between June 2003 and June 2008,
16 the price of regular grade gasoline and diesel fuels
17 rose 171 percent and 229 percent, respectively.

18 (4) These rising costs represent an unavoidable
19 burden, and have placed serious constraints on the
20 ability of volunteer companies to respond to fire
21 emergencies.

1 **SEC. 3. DEFINITION OF QUALIFIED VOLUNTEER FIRE DE-**
 2 **PARTMENT.**

3 In this Act, the term “qualified volunteer fire depart-
 4 ment” has the same meaning given that term in section
 5 150(e) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986.

6 **SEC. 4. GASOLINE AND DIESEL FUEL SUBSIDY PROGRAM.**

7 (a) ESTABLISHMENT OF BASELINE.—

8 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Housing
 9 and Urban Development shall, for calendar year
 10 2007, determine for each of the 5 Petroleum Admin-
 11 istration for Defense Districts the average annual
 12 price per gallon for—

13 (A) gasoline; and

14 (B) diesel fuel.

15 (2) BASIS FOR PRICE PER GALLON.—The aver-
 16 age annual price per gallon determined under para-
 17 graph (1) shall be based solely on data reported by
 18 the Energy Information Administration.

19 (3) BASELINE.—The price per gallon deter-
 20 mined under paragraph (1) shall serve as the base-
 21 line fuel cost for each Petroleum Administration for
 22 Defense District.

23 (b) PAYMENTS.—

24 (1) SUBMISSION OF RECEIPTS.—At the end of
 25 each calendar year, each qualified volunteer fire de-
 26 partment seeking reimbursement under this section

1 shall submit to the Secretary of Housing and Urban
 2 Development all of its receipts and bills of sales doc-
 3 umenting the amounts of gasoline and diesel fuel
 4 purchased by such department during that calendar
 5 year. Each department shall also provide a sum total
 6 of the—

7 (A) aggregate number of gallons of gaso-
 8 line and diesel fuel purchased by the depart-
 9 ment during that calendar year; and

10 (B) costs of purchasing such gasoline and
 11 diesel fuel.

12 (2) DETERMINATION OF SUBSIDY AMOUNTS.—

13 The Secretary of Housing and Urban Development
 14 shall reimburse a qualified volunteer fire department
 15 for 75 percent of the difference between—

16 (A) the actual expenditures of the depart-
 17 ment for gasoline and diesel fuel for a calendar
 18 year as determined under paragraph (1); and

19 (B) the amount that such expenditures
 20 would have cost had the department determined
 21 such expenditures utilizing the baseline fuels
 22 costs determined under subsection (a).

23 (3) SPECIAL RULE RELATING TO STATES SALES
 24 TAX.—If the State in which a qualified volunteer fire
 25 department is located does not charge local or State

1 fuel taxes on such departments when such depart-
2 ments purchase gasoline or diesel fuel, the amount
3 of such omitted sales tax shall be added back in to
4 any determination made under paragraph (2)(A).

5 (c) REGULATIONS.—Not later than 60 days after the
6 date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Housing
7 and Urban Development shall promulgate such regulations
8 as may be necessary to implement and administer the
9 grant and subsidy programs authorized by this section.

10 **SEC. 5. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

11 There are authorized to be appropriated such sums
12 as are necessary to carry out this Act.

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