

111TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 822

To support the recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters and emergency medical services personnel, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

APRIL 2, 2009

Mr. SANDERS introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs

A BILL

To support the recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters and emergency medical services personnel, and for other purposes.

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 “Volunteer Firefighter
5 and EMS Support Act of 2009”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress makes the following findings:

8 (1) Volunteer firefighters and emergency med-
9 ical services personnel are a vital component of the
10 first responders across the United States.

1 (2) The 800,000 volunteer firefighters and
2 emergency medical service personnel in the United
3 States save lives and property everyday.

4 (3) The national financial savings resulting
5 from volunteer firefighting and emergency medical
6 services has been calculated at more than
7 \$37,000,000,000 each year.

8 (4) Many volunteer fire stations and emergency
9 medical services organizations in the United States
10 face growing challenges as volunteers contend with
11 increased competition for their time from their jobs,
12 families, and other responsibilities.

13 (5) Some State and local governments provide
14 financial incentives to volunteer firefighters and
15 emergency medical services personnel, such as retire-
16 ment benefits and tuition assistance. Unfortunately,
17 many communities that rely on volunteer firefighters
18 and emergency medical services personnel, especially
19 rural and low-income communities, do not have the
20 resources to provide such incentives.

21 (6) There is an important role for the Federal
22 Government and the Administrator of the United
23 States Fire Administration in supporting volunteer
24 firefighters and emergency medical services per-
25 sonnel, including providing funds to contribute to in-

1 centives for the recruitment and retention of volun-
2 teers.

3 **SEC. 3. ASSISTANCE FOR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS AND**
4 **EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES PER-**
5 **SONNEL.**

6 The Federal Fire Prevention and Control Act of 1974
7 (15 U.S.C. 2201 et seq.) is amended by inserting after
8 section 33 the following new section:

9 **“SEC. 33A. ASSISTANCE FOR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS**
10 **AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES PER-**
11 **SONNEL.**

12 “(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary shall estab-
13 lish a program to provide funds to a State or local govern-
14 ment, non-profit firefighter association, or governmental
15 or nongovernmental emergency medical services organiza-
16 tion, that carries out a volunteer firefighter incentive pro-
17 gram in accordance with the provisions of this section.

18 “(b) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

19 “(1) APPROVED BENEFIT OR INCENTIVE.—The
20 term ‘approved benefit or incentive’ means a benefit
21 or incentive that has been approved by the Adminis-
22 trator and is provided to a volunteer firefighter, in-
23 cluding—

24 “(A) a retirement benefit;

1 “(B) reimbursement for travel and train-
2 ing;

3 “(C) health insurance or other health bene-
4 fits;

5 “(D) life insurance;

6 “(E) tuition or school loan forgiveness;

7 “(F) a tax reduction; and

8 “(G) any other benefit or incentive ap-
9 proved by the Administrator.

10 “(2) SECRETARY.—The term ‘Secretary’ means
11 the Secretary of Homeland Security.

12 “(3) VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTER.—The term
13 ‘volunteer firefighter’ means an individual who pro-
14 vides firefighting service or emergency medical serv-
15 ice to a State or local government or a governmental
16 or nongovernmental organization without pay. A vol-
17 unteer firefighter may receive benefits or incentives
18 for firefighting service or emergency medical service,
19 including benefits and incentives described in sub-
20 paragraphs (A) through (G) of paragraph (1).

21 “(4) VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTER INCENTIVE
22 PROGRAM.—The term ‘volunteer firefighter incentive
23 program’ means a program carried out by a State
24 or local government, a non-profit firefighter associa-
25 tion, or a governmental or nongovernmental emer-

1 agency medical services organization to provide ap-
2 proved benefits or incentives.

3 “(c) MATCHING PAYMENTS TO STATES.—

4 “(1) REQUIREMENT.—For each fiscal year in
5 which a State or local government, non-profit fire-
6 fighter association, or governmental or nongovern-
7 mental emergency medical services organization car-
8 ries out a volunteer firefighter incentive program,
9 the Secretary shall pay such government, associa-
10 tion, or organization, out of any money in the Treas-
11 ury not otherwise appropriated for such fiscal year,
12 an amount equal to the total amount of expenditures
13 of funds not received from the Federal Government
14 made by such government, association, or organiza-
15 tion for such fiscal year to carry out the volunteer
16 firefighter incentive program.

17 “(2) ENTITLEMENT.—Paragraph (1) con-
18 stitutes budget authority in advance of appropria-
19 tions Acts and represents the obligation of the Fed-
20 eral Government to provide payment to a State or
21 local government, non-profit firefighter association,
22 or governmental or nongovernmental emergency
23 medical services organization of any amount pro-
24 vided for under such paragraph.

1 “(d) REGULATIONS.—The Secretary shall prescribe
2 regulations to carry out this section.

3 “(e) REPORTS.—

4 “(1) REPORTS FROM RECIPIENTS.—A State or
5 local government, non-profit firefighter association,
6 or governmental or nongovernmental emergency
7 medical service organization that receives funds
8 under this section to carry out a volunteer firefighter
9 incentive program for a fiscal year shall submit to
10 the Secretary a report on—

11 “(A) the use of such funds; and

12 “(B) the programs to recruit or retain vol-
13 unteer firefighters carried out by the govern-
14 ment, association, or organization during that
15 fiscal year.

16 “(2) REPORTS FROM THE SECRETARY.—Not
17 later than 1 year after the date of the enactment of
18 the Volunteer Firefighter and EMS Support Act of
19 2009, and annually thereafter, the Secretary shall
20 submit to Congress a report on—

21 “(A) the activities carried out under this
22 section during the previous year; and

1 “(B) the status of programs to recruit and
2 retain volunteer firefighters in the United
3 States.”.

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