

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTER AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

Enhance Recruitment and Retention | Reward Those Who Serve | Protect Our Protectors



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Facing a Crisis

Our volunteer Firefighters and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) are essential to keeping our state healthy and safe:

- [90.8%](#) of fire departments in New York state are registered as fully volunteer
- Nearly half ([49.2%](#)) of EMS agencies rely exclusively on volunteers, while [31.1%](#) have a combination of volunteers and paid staff

Unfortunately, we have seen a drastic decline in the number of volunteers:

- Since the early 2000s, New York's volunteer fire service has dropped from [120,000 to about 80,000](#) members
- According to a [2024 report](#), two-thirds of EMS agencies with volunteers reported a decrease in certified volunteers in the preceding three years, with 16% of such agencies seeing a drop of more than 25%



Our Goals

- *Enhance Recruitment and Retention*
- *Reward Our Volunteers*
- *Protect Those Who Protect Us*



Enhance Recruitment and Retention

- *Create tuition forgiveness programs and municipal health benefits*
- *Provide training opportunities for youth interested in volunteering*
- *Create programs to provide college credit for successful completion of service learning programs*
- *Increase incentives to make volunteering in the fire and EMS fields more attractive*



Reward Our Volunteers

- *Provide free use of state parks and campsites for volunteer fire and EMS*
- *Implement tax breaks for, and incentivize hiring of, volunteer fire and EMS*



- *Increase reimbursement for personal protective equipment*



Protect First Responders

- *Prevent harassment of our volunteer fire and EMS workers*
- *Protect first responders from fentanyl exposure*
- *Ensure proper punishment for those purposely targeting first responders and volunteers*





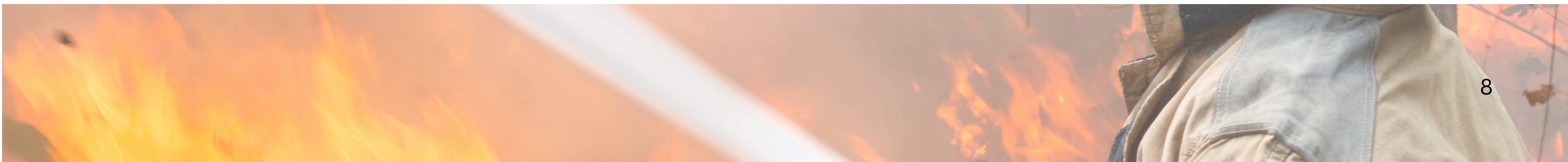
**ASSEMBLY MINORITY
VOLUNTEER FIRE AND EMS
LEGISLATION**





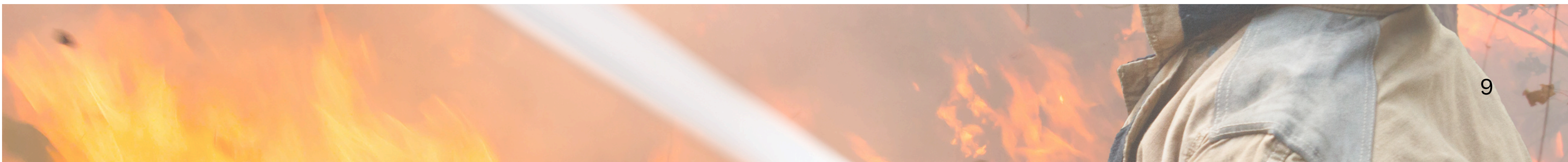
Enhance Recruitment and Retention

- **Omnibus Emergency Services Volunteer Incentive Act**: Provide a \$400 tax credit to volunteer firefighters and ambulance workers, exempt registration and use taxes for vehicles used in the performance of duty, create a loan forgiveness program, and provide some other benefits (**A.6414, Palmesano**).
- **Tax Credits for Volunteer Firefighter Training Certification**: Provide a credit against personal income tax for volunteer firefighters who complete qualifications to become a training instructor (**A.4496, Gallahan**).
- **Recruiting Young Talent**: Expand programs sponsored by fire departments to facilitate more of a learning experience for participants interested in the firefighting field (**A.2079, Manktelow**).
- **Service Learning Program**: Direct SUNY Trustees to adopt programs to provide academic credit for successful completion of a service learning, internship, or independent study program in relation to volunteer fire or ambulance service (**A.7908, DeStefano**).
- **EMS and Volunteer Firefighters Income Tax Exemption**: Provide a state income tax exemption for qualifying volunteer firefighters and volunteer ambulance workers (**A.5221, Tague**).
- **State Income Tax Credit for First Responders**: Provide a state income tax credit to volunteer firefighters and members of a volunteer ambulance corps in good standing up to \$2,500 (**A.1064, Angelino**).



Enhance Recruitment and Retention

- **Provide Additional Tax Benefits**: Change the law to ensure volunteer firefighter and ambulance workers can receive both the real property tax exemption and the personal income tax credit available to them (**A.2029, Maher**).



Assembly Minority Volunteer Fire/EMS Legislation

Reward Our Volunteers

- **Free State Parks and Campsites**: Provide free use of state parks and campsites for volunteer firefighters and members of a volunteer ambulance service (**A.4344, Morinello**).
- **Service Award Tax Exemption**: Exempt any service award paid to a volunteer firefighter or ambulance worker from state income tax (**A.5782, Norber**).
- **New York State Volunteer Fire Protection Emergency Reimbursement Account**: Divert monies collected from the public safety communications surcharge into a newly created volunteer fire protection reimbursement account to be used to reimburse volunteer departments and emergency medical services for expenses incurred related to procuring personal protective equipment (PPE). Monies collected and deposited into the account may be used to reimburse volunteer fire departments and emergency medical services for lost revenue due to either municipal budget cuts or the cancellation of public events such as fundraisers or charity events (**A.4667, Bologna**).
- **First Responder MTA Toll Exemption**: Establish a central business district toll exemption for officers and employees of the city of New York, first responders, physicians, nurses, and people entering the city for medical treatment (**A.1174, Beephan**).



Assembly Minority Volunteer Fire/EMS Legislation

Protect First Responders

- **Protect Employment for Volunteer Training**: Allow volunteer firefighters and EMS to attend training without being penalized by their employer and create tax incentives for employing volunteers (**A.4414-A, Bologna**).
- **PTSD Therapeutic Techniques**: Require the Office of Mental Health to conduct a study related to using therapeutic PTSD techniques (**A.4654, Sempolinski**).
- **First Responder Sick Leave**: Allow first responders diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder to request line-of-duty sick leave (**A.2485, Bendett**).
- **Harassment of First Responder**: Create the crime of harassment of a first responder (**A.5369, Morinello**).
- **Exposing a First Responder to Fentanyl**: Include exposing a first responder to fentanyl, or a fentanyl derivative, in the definition of the offense of assault in the first degree (**A.3299, Durso**).
- **No Parole for Murder Involving a First Responder**: Require a sentence of life imprisonment without parole for murder in the first degree involving the killing of a first responder (**A.1658, Slater**).



Protect First Responders

- **Hate Crimes Against First Responders**: Designate offenses against law enforcement, emergency medical services personnel, and/or firefighters as hate crimes, thereby increasing the penalty for the offense (**A.5224, DeStefano**).
- **Increased Protection from Harassment**: Make it a crime to physically assault or throw or transfer bodily fluids or waste onto firefighters and other responders in order to stop them from doing their lawful duties (**A.6926, Molitor**).

