

Fellow Members of FASNY:

I am pleased to tell you that earlier this week, the New York State Legislature passed a key piece of legislation initiated and strongly backed by FASNY – one that makes the 100,000 volunteer firefighters and 30,000 volunteer EMS personnel statewide eligible to purchase low-cost health insurance using their own funds.

This bill marks the latest step FASNY has taken toward addressing the dual challenges of recruitment and retention. The health insurance bills, formally known as Assembly bill A7699 (sponsored by Assembly Member RoAnn Destito) and Senate bill S4617 (sponsored by Senator James Seward), now go to the Governor's desk to be signed.

Allowing potential and existing volunteers the opportunity to buy the same insurance coverage as their municipal counterparts will serve as a strong incentive for these men and women to join – and, more importantly, *stay with* – their local fire departments. This in turn will keep our communities stronger and safer. It should also be noted that this new law will not cost the state or local governments anything, since volunteers would be using their own funds to purchase coverage.

FASNY strongly believes that Governor Paterson will do the right thing and sign the bill into law.

“Volunteer firefighters are critical to public health and safety,” said Assembly Member Destito. “New York State and local governments should recognize and reward the critical role emergency service volunteers play in the community by granting them the option of joining the same low-cost health care plans municipal employees are allowed to join.”

We urge the membership of FASNY to let Governor Paterson

know how important this bill is to the volunteer fire service and to the communities we serve. Please call the Governor's Office at (518) 474-8390 or visit www.ny.gov/governor/contact/index.html to send him an email. Together, we can ensure that this important bill is signed into law.

Sincerely,

Michael P. Wutz
President
FASNY