First Vice President David Jacobowitz addresses everyone in attendance.

Second Vice President Joseph F. Kelly and Reverend Wayne F. Jagow speak to the crowd.

The crowd listens intently to the speakers at the 2008 FASNY Fall Legislative Conference.

Tiger Schmittendorf presents “Leadership in the Firehouse: Recruitment and Retention - Rescue and Recovery Operations.”
The Firemen’s Association of the State of New York has concluded its 75th Fall Legislative Conference and issued the 2009 FASNY Scorecard as approved by more than 400 attendees representing all regions of the state.

Each year, FASNY solicits suggestions for legislation from its sectional membership, collates and collectively analyzes the submissions, and brings them to a final vote of the collective body at their Fall Legislative Conference.

This grass roots democratic process produces a blueprint for legislative initiatives for the coming legislative year which include priority items such as Volunteer Fire Benefit Law (VFBL) reform, making permanent the VFBL heart benefit, and further clarifying amendments to the recently enacted Volunteer Responder Health Insurance benefit which will be effective in early January of 2009.

New proposals approved by the voting body include legislation that would require source patient testing for HIV when an emergency responder suffers a blood or body fluid exposure and an initiative allowing for a background check of individuals applying for membership in a volunteer fire department who may have been convicted of a sex offense.

Initiatives approved underscored volunteer fire and EMS recruitment and retention. FASNY will once again seek approval for changes to the volunteer responder post high school scholarship program and legislation that would allow volunteer firefighters and ambulance workers to receive both a real property tax exemption and income tax credit which are respectively offered by the state and local government but are not allowed to be taken in combination.

Cost recovery for fire department ambulance service and cost recovery for hazardous materials spills were also advanced at the Fall Legislative Conference. Both legislative agenda items allow for local governments and their fire and EMS responders to cooperate in the recovery of rapidly expanding costs related to rising response parameters in these areas.

FASNY’S Fall Legislative Conference was highlighted by discussions of the state’s dire economic condition and the predicted budget shortfalls through 2012. Volunteers attending expressed concern regarding burdening the state with costly requests involving recruitment and retention incentives. The legislative priorities for the 2009 proactive agenda will be on bills that do not have any significant impact on state revenues while still drawing attention to the responsibility of the state and the volunteer responder community to assure the safety and well being of its constituents.
This past October, the FASNY office in Albany said goodbye to one of our longstanding employees, Louise Cargill. Louise has been FASNY’s meeting planner for eight years, and without question, did an outstanding job arranging meetings and booking thousands of rooms on behalf of FASNY’s officers, directors, committees and staff. As the rest of the 107 staff is all of younger age, we often called her the “matriarch of the office.” It was a fitting title – just ask anyone who waited until the last minute to make a reservation! Her eight years with FASNY began on a part time basis, however, she was soon coerced into working full time by Past President Finnegan and further coerced by myself to stay on a bit longer, prolonging her recent retirement. Louise was a real pleasure to work with and to have as a staff member working behind the scenes to help the volunteer fire service of New York State. Louise will be missed by many – especially our remaining staff at the 107 office. On behalf of FASNY and its entire membership, we wish her a happy and enjoyable retirement! Good Luck, Louise!

“Destito’s legislative record during her 16 years in office shows an unwavering commitment to volunteer firefighters, EMS, police and other first responders,” said FASNY President Thomas J. Cuff, Jr. “As the daughter of a firefighter herself, she understands the need to properly train our volunteers, and for retaining and recruiting members for our fire departments. This award is our small way of showing our appreciation for all that she’s done.”

“I am thankful to the men and women of our volunteer fire service for the work they do protecting our communities,” said Destito. “I intend to continue the fight for them in Albany, whether it’s for training funds and access to health insurance, or to help bolster and increase membership at our firehouses. I also look forward to working with President Cuff and FASNY’s leadership on ensuring that the critical needs of our volunteers are met.”

Assemblieswoman RoAnn Destito addresses the crowd.

President Thomas J. Cuff, Jr., First Vice President David Jacobowitz and Assemblywoman RoAnn Destito take the podium.

Assemblywoman RoAnn Destito with her Golden Trumpet Award.

Assemblywoman RoAnn Destito addresses the crowd.

President Thomas J. Cuff, Jr., First Vice President David Jacobowitz and Assemblywoman RoAnn Destito take the podium.

Assemblywoman RoAnn Destito with her Golden Trumpet Award.

Louise Cargill receiving a gift from Richard Webster, President of Onondaga County Volunteer Firemen’s Association for her service to the Association.

The FASNY office in Albany, (l. to r) Jessica Kirk, Mary Ellen Shea, Harrison Breuer, David A. Quinn, Louise Cargill, Jason Metz

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The FASNY office in Albany, (l. to r) Jessica Kirk, Mary Ellen Shea, Harrison Breuer, David A. Quinn, Louise Cargill, Jason Metz
n October, FASNY approved the comprehensive 2009 FASNY Scorecard, a proactive agenda composed of 19 items. To promote this agenda, FASNY is continuing its Legislative Outreach Program. Through educational seminars and articles, the program is designed to provide information on the 2009 proactive agenda and to address other important and timely legislative matters.

In 2008, the program conducted 12 legislative seminars with over 500 FASNY members and about 40 legislators in attendance. These meetings covered a variety of topics and usually lasted 60 to 90 minutes. A typical meeting included explanation and clarification of legislative issues, a legislative status report, presentations by legislators and a question and answer session. Attendees also received a 50-page comprehensive guide to FASNY’s legislative agenda.

In 2009, the primary focus of the program will continue to be educational seminars relating to legislation affecting the volunteer fire service. During the year, these meetings will be conducted across the state in coordination with the sectional associations. The seminars will provide a comprehensive overview and explanation of the 2009 proactive agenda as well as an update on other important legislative issues. In addition, the sectionals will have the ability to include additional legislative topics into the seminar if desired. In this way, each sectional association will be able to tailor the seminars to meet its specific needs and interests. For example, a sectional association may decide that it would like an examination of the Good Governance Laws of 2006, a discussion of volunteer firefighter scholarship programs, an overview of VFBL, or a discussion on any other topic that the sectional finds interesting.

Sectional participation in the Legislative Outreach Program is voluntary. If the sectional association decides to participate, the seminars will be conducted on dates and locations selected by the sectional. If a sectional wishes, it may schedule more than one seminar. At this time, the following meetings have already been scheduled:

**Current Schedule of Meetings and Locations:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 11th, 2009</td>
<td>Northern (Copenhagen)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 24th, 2009</td>
<td>Central (Enfield)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 31st, 2009</td>
<td>Central - Oneida County</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 7th, 2009</td>
<td>Legislative Breakfast (Deerfield)</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 28th, 2009</td>
<td>Southern (Hauppauge)</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 7th, 2009</td>
<td>Hudson Valley (Montrose)</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 7th, 2009</td>
<td>Central (Walton)</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 18th, 2009</td>
<td>Southern (Mineola)</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 19th, 2009</td>
<td>Southwestern (Erie County)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 26th, 2009</td>
<td>Northern-Central (Geneva)</td>
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For more information on the Legislative Outreach Program, please contact FASNY’s Legislative Representative K.T. Hannan Public Affairs at (518) 465-6550 or Mike Karashay, FASNY Legislative Committee member at (845) 246-8395.

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**Final Action Report for 2008**

In the 2008 legislative session, nearly thirty volunteer fire service related bills passed both the Senate and Assembly. These bills were then presented to the Governor for his approval or veto. To lend some organization to these bills, each bill has been placed into one of the following categories:

1. **FASNY Scorecard Legislation**
   - These are free-standing legislative bills (not budget bills) that were on FASNY’s Scorecard.
2. **FASNY Scorecard Budget Initiatives**
   - These are FASNY Scorecard items that are addressed in the NYS budget.
3. **“Priority 1” Bills**
   - These are non-Scorecard bills that have been identified by FASNY’s Board, Legislative Committee, EMS Committee or any other key FASNY committee as having statewide impact on firefighters and other emergency responders.
4. **“Priority 2” Bills**
   - These are bills that have a more limited impact on certain aspects or particular segments of the volunteer fire and emergency responder community.
5. **“Priority 3” Bills**
   - These are bills that have a very specific local focus. These include bills that authorize local tax exemptions, bills that address local residency requirements for fire company membership, local consolidation measures, and other matters unique to certain localities.

Each bill is set forth below in its respective category. Please note that the bills are identified by their number and sponsor. For instance, “S3673” is NYS Senate bill number S3673 sponsored by Senator LaValle (and is the same bill as Assembly bill number A8424 sponsored by Assemblyman Magee). A bill summary (“SUMM”) is also included which describes the bill and indicates which section of law was added or amended. For instance, S3673 amends (“Amd”) section 669-c (“S669-c”) of the Education Law (“Ed L”). Please note that if a bill adds a new section of law, then the notation “Add” is used instead of “Amd” to indicate that the bill added a new section of law. Please also note that the term “Last Act” indicates the last action taken on the bill.

**FASNY Scorecard Legislation (4 bills):**

- **S3673 LaValle**
  - As A 8424 Magee
  - SUMM: Amd S669-c, Ed L Provides that volunteer organizations may submit up to three applications to the higher education services corporation for voluntary recruitment scholarships.
  - Last Act: 09/25/08 vetoed memo.156

- **S3673 LaValle**
  - Last Act: 06/30/08 substituted by s3673

- **S2, Chap 606 of 2006**
  - Eff. Date 06/30/2008

- **S6839 Maziarz**
  - Same as A 9922 John
  - Eff. Date 06/30/2008

- **S6839 Maziarz**
  - Same as A 9922 John

- **A7699A Destito**
  - Same as S 4617-A Seward
  - SUMM : Amd S92-a, Gen Muni L Relates to a volunteer firefighter and volunteer ambulance worker health program.
  - Eff. Date 01/17/2009

- **S6839 Maziarz**
  - Same as A 9922 John
  - Eff. Date 06/30/2008

- **S6839 Maziarz**
  - Same as A 9922 John
  - Eff. Date 06/30/2008
The Volunteer Firefighter Personal Income Tax Credit Law Update

T he 2008 calendar year is about to end and this means that tax return time is right around the corner. As you get ready to prepare your tax return for the 2008 tax year, please remember that active volunteer firefighters and ambulance workers are eligible for a $200 personal income tax credit.

FASNY has received numerous inquiries about this new tax benefit since its adoption in 2006. To help you prepare for your next tax return, below is a list of frequently asked questions:

**Question 1:** When did this benefit become law?  
**Answer 1:** 2006. During the 2006 New York State legislative session, FASNY and its membership advocated for a personal income tax benefit for volunteer firefighters. As a result, a volunteer firefighter personal income tax credit was included in the state budget and went into effect for the 2007 tax year.

**Question 2:** Is this tax benefit the same as the volunteer real property tax exemption?  
**Answer 2:** No. In New York, there are two different tax benefits that a volunteer firefighter may qualify for. The first tax benefit is a real property tax exemption. The real property tax exemption may be offered to volunteers through local municipalities (for more information on this tax benefit, please see Question 10). The second tax benefit is the personal income tax credit. This tax benefit is offered through the state.

**Question 3:** Is the volunteer personal income tax credit available for the 2008 tax year?  
**Answer 3:** Yes.

**Question 4:** What is the amount of the tax credit?  
**Answer 4:** The amount of the tax credit is $200 for an individual volunteer. The tax credit is $400 for a husband and wife who file a joint tax return and who both qualify for the credit.

**Question 5:** Who does the personal income tax credit apply to?  
**Answer 5:** The tax credit applies to volunteer firefighters and volunteer ambulance workers.

**Question 6:** Does a volunteer firefighter or volunteer ambulance worker have to be active in order to qualify for the personal income tax credit?  
**Answer 6:** Yes. In order to qualify for the tax credit the individual must be an active volunteer.

**Question 7:** Can a volunteer receive both the personal income tax credit and the real property tax exemption?  
**Answer 7:** No. A volunteer is not permitted to receive both tax benefits. In other words, a volunteer must choose one or the other.
**Question 8:** I have been hearing a lot about a legislative proposal that would allow a volunteer to receive both the personal income tax credit and a real property tax exemption. What is this all about?

**Answer 8:** During the 2008 New York State legislative session, FASNY and its membership advocated for a bill that expanded the volunteer personal income tax credit. The bill passed the New York State Senate and Assembly, but was vetoed by the Governor for financial reasons. The bill would have allowed a volunteer to receive both the personal income tax credit and a real property tax exemption. Because of the current financial crisis in New York, the Governor decided to veto the bill. The volunteer fire service was not the only group that was affected by the Governor’s veto pen in 2008. In fact, the Governor vetoed over 150 bills this year due to budget implications.

**Question 9:** Does the Governor’s veto mean that the $200 personal income tax credit is no longer available?

**Answer 9:** No. The $200 personal income tax credit ($400 for a husband and wife filing a joint return) is still available. The Governor’s veto simply means that a volunteer is not permitted to receive both the personal income tax credit and the real property tax exemption. A volunteer still has the ability to choose one or the other.

**Question 10:** How do I know if I am receiving or am eligible for a real property tax exemption?

**Answer 10:** Contact your local assessor. The volunteer real property tax exemption is offered at the local (not the state) level. In New York State, 28 different counties have the ability to authorize a real property tax exemption to volunteers. To determine if the county you reside in authorizes this tax benefit, you should contact your local assessor.

**Question 11:** Is anything being done to allow a volunteer to collect both the personal income tax credit and the real property tax exemption?

**Answer 11:** Yes. FASNY advocated for such a bill in the 2008 legislative session. The bill passed both the New York State Senate and Assembly, but was vetoed by the Governor (see Question 8 above). At FASNY’s 2008 Fall Legislative Conference, the FASNY membership decided to include this legislative proposal on the 2009 Scorecard. FASNY will be advocating strongly for passage of this bill again in 2009.

**Question 12:** How do I apply for the personal income tax credit?

**Answer 12:** A volunteer applies for the personal income tax credit when the volunteer files his or her New York State income tax return. The New York State Department of Taxation and Finance will develop the tax form for this tax credit.

For more information on the volunteer personal income tax credit or for assistance with questions, please contact FASNY’s Legislative Representative K.T. Hannan Public Affairs at (518) 465-6550.
The annual Firefighter Games Fall Cook-Off was a hit for sure with the Central New York participants. The theme this year was “firehouse chili and homemade bread.” The event was held at the Holiday Inn Turf in Albany on Saturday, October 25th, 2008.

In years past, many volunteer judges from the FASNY organization did the honors of the taste testing. However, this year we were honored to have Mike McDermitt, head chef of the Holiday Inn Turf, Steve Barnes of the Times Union, and Bill Dowd, retiree of the Times Union. Thank you, judges!

The aroma around the Holiday Inn Turf that fine afternoon was mouthwatering, to say the least. It was amazing to see how many different recipes of chili and homemade breads that participants were able to mix together to win the vote of the judges. It was definitely a difficult decision for the judges, as all were very tasty!

After much deliberation, the judges had to make their final decisions. Central New York participants took it all. The winners for the firehouse chili were: 1st place: Mary Hitchcock of Earlville, 2nd place: Colleen Kotars of Syracuse, and 3rd place: Dave Spencer of Mohawk. Winners of the homemade bread were: 1st place: Mary Hitchcock of Earlville, 2nd place: Irene Spencer of Syracuse, and 3rd place: Val Clark of Marietta. Congratulations to a job well done!

There were nine bread entries and eight chili entries. This event was well attended by those who anxiously waited to sample the chili and breads. A special thank you goes out to McCadam Cheese for their generous donation of cheese for this event.

Later in the evening while socializing, the Firefighter Games Committee held their Putt – Putt Golf Challenge for the Chapel Fund charity for the Firemen’s Home. A total of $235 was raised during this fun filled event. Central New York once again reigned over the event. Event winners were: 1st place: Gordy Kotars of Syracuse, 2nd place: Val Clark of Marietta and 3rd place: Bob Faugh of Rush.

The next Firefighter Games event will be held at Greek Peek in Cortland, February 13th through 15th, 2009. There are many exciting activities scheduled. Please visit the FASNY website under “Events,” “FASNY Winter Games” for more detailed information. You may also contact any Firefighter Games Committee member.

We hope to see you all there!