

1 **2020 NYSAC Legislative Conference**
2 **Standing Committee on Public Safety**
3 **Resolution #1**

4 **Resolution in Support of State Legislation Addressing the Volunteer**
5 **Firefighter and EMS Recruitment and Retention Crisis**

6 **WHEREAS**, throughout the state, counties are grappling with a shortage of volunteer
7 firefighter and EMS personnel in their communities. Regardless of location, every
8 county outside of New York City is contending with this issue; and

9 **WHEREAS**, the shortage of available personnel is both an issue within volunteer
10 fire companies as well as community ambulance corps; and

11 **WHEREAS**, according to a 2015 study by the Firemen’s Association of the State
12 of New York (FASNY), volunteer firefighters alone save New York State more than
13 \$3 billion each year; and

14 **WHEREAS**, as training requirements and call volumes have increased, it has
15 become harder for volunteers to make the time commitment departments need;
16 and

17 **WHEREAS**, according to FASNY, the number of volunteer firefighters in New
18 York State has dropped from 110,000 in 1990 to fewer than 100,000 today; and

19 **WHEREAS**, volunteer firefighters and members of ambulance corps do not
20 receive any direct monetary compensation for their service; and

21 **WHEREAS**, counties across the state have been working on this issue for
22 decades; and

23 **WHEREAS**, in 2008, Westchester County passed a local law to provide a real
24 property tax exemption to volunteer firefighters and volunteer ambulance service
25 members and to continue this exemption in the case of certain un-remarried
26 spouses of deceased volunteers; and

27 **WHEREAS**, Nassau County also provides a property tax exemption for volunteer
28 firefighters and ambulance workers and offers a lifetime exemption to members
29 with over 20 years of volunteer service; and

30 **WHEREAS**, Suffolk County has also passed similar legislation in 2003: real
31 property owned by an enrolled member of an incorporated volunteer fire
32 company, fire department, or incorporated voluntary ambulance service, or such
33 enrolled member and spouse, or such deceased enrolled member's un-remarried
34 spouse, shall be exempt from taxation to the extent of 10% of the assessed value of
35 such property for county purposes, exclusive of special assessments; and

36 **WHEREAS**, since 2010, a number of additional counties have followed suit; and

1 **WHEREAS**, Columbia County was successful in obtaining a countywide
2 certificate of need for all of their ambulance providers (both paid and volunteer),
3 allowing each responding agency the authority to respond to a crisis within the
4 county, whereby each agency maintains primary responsibility for their own
5 territory and each agency subsequently contracts with the county for participation
6 in the system, and in return, the county gives them payment for standby
7 assignments and 911 calls outside their jurisdiction and access to the ePCR system.

8 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the New York State Association of
9 Counties (NYSAC) supports state legislation and programs, including:

- 10 • S.3525 (Breslin)/A.3721 (Pretlow) that requires insurers to issue reimbursement
11 directly to ambulance providers if the insured has filed an assignment of benefits
12 for ambulance services;
- 13 • S.6802 (Felder)/A.8817 (Gunther) to increase the volunteer firefighter and EMS
14 state income tax credit to \$500 for eligible individuals and \$1000 for eligible married
15 joint filers, beginning in 2020;
- 16 • S.3526 (Breslin)/A.6211 (Magnarelli) to ensure that responding ambulance
17 service companies receive direct payment for all ambulance service transports
18 upon submission of an invoice to the insurance company without the need for
19 responding ambulance company to be a preferred provider;
- 20 • S.577 (Kennedy)/A.4423 (DenDekker) to allow counties to establish a local
21 tuition grants program for active volunteer firefighters and EMS personnel
22 at state operated institutions, up to fifty percent of tuition required at state
23 operated institutions or community colleges. This legislation also provides
24 that, where a county has created a tuition grants program, the state would
25 reimburse the county at one-half the actual tuition grant established by the
26 county for each eligible volunteer;
- 27 • S.1222 (Ritchie)/A.3479 (Zebrowski) give a credit on the New York State
28 income tax for all volunteer firefighters and volunteer ambulance corps
29 members who are active. In order to be active, the individual would have to
30 attend more than 40% of the company's activities per year. This plan calls
31 for giving \$200 a year for service credit up to a maximum of 10 years, or a
32 maximum of a \$1,100 credit.
- 33 • Creation of a statewide task force to investigate, promote, and identify funding
34 for the recruitment and retention of volunteer EMS and firefighter personnel;
- 35 • S.3685B (Brooks) / A.1778A (Jones) authorizing volunteer fire departments or
36 volunteer fire companies to collect fees and charges for advanced life support
37 services;
- 38 • S.1381 (Ritchie)/A.1582 (Jones) to amends the general municipal law, in relation
39 to classifying emergency medical services provided by municipalities as essential
40 services for the purposes of applying for and receiving state aid;
- 41 • Grants for volunteer firefighters and emergency services personnel recruitment
42 and retention; and

1 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that copies of this resolution be sent to the counties
2 of New York State encouraging member counties to enact similar resolutions; and

3 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that NYSAC shall forward copies of this resolution to
4 the Governor Andrew M. Cuomo, the New York State Legislature, and all others deemed
5 necessary and proper.