

(Ross Township, PA) - U.S. Representative Jason Altmire (PA-4) met with local firefighters at the Berkeley Hills Fire Station in Ross Township on Saturday to announce his support of legislation that will provide tax relief to volunteer firefighters and emergency personnel.

The Volunteer Responder Incentive Protection Act (H.R. 943) will amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow state and local governments the flexibility to develop beneficial tax incentives for volunteer firefighters and emergency personnel without federal interference. Some states and local municipalities have offered modest financial benefits to their emergency responders to assist with volunteer recruitment and retention, including pay-per-call, reimbursement for expenses, tax breaks, and pension-like plans called length of service awards. H.R. 943 would prevent the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) from taxing compensation awarded to volunteer emergency responders for service to their communities.

“Volunteer firefighters make up more than 70 percent of our nation's firefighting forces. Unfortunately, over the past two decades, the number of volunteers has declined due to greater demands on people's time and the risky nature of firefighting,” said Congressman Altmire. “I hope that this legislation will provide a small incentive not only to boost recruitment, but also to help ensure that fire departments in all of our communities retain a solid base of experienced firefighters.”

In addition to his support of H.R. 943, Congressman Altmire recently voted to pass the Homeland Security Appropriations bill which will expand support for emergency responders through equipment and training grants to local law enforcement personnel and firefighters. The bill includes \$230 million for Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grants which can be used by volunteer fire departments for recruitment and retention programs.

“The recent tragedy of the nine firefighters killed in South Carolina is an unfortunate reminder of how the brave men and women who respond to emergencies put their lives on the line each day,” said Congressman Altmire. “Volunteer firefighters play a critical role in our communities, and in many areas, they are the only responders for fire, medical and other emergencies. I will continue to work with our local volunteers to ensure that they have the resources they need to continue their lifesaving work.”

H.R. 943 is supported by the International Association of Fire Chiefs, National Volunteer Fire Council and the Congressional Fire Services Institute.