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Larson holds roundtable with local volunteer firefighters as he reintroduces bill TO Provide tax relief for volunteer first responders

SOUTH WINDSOR- Congressman John B. Larson met with local volunteer firefighters and first responders today at a roundtable discussion addressing the Volunteer Firefighter's Tax Incentive Protection Act (H.R. 943), which Larson introduced Thursday in Washington.

This bill was first introduced in 2002 after South Windsor Volunteer Fire Department Chief Phil Crombie, Jr., the Town of South Windsor and other volunteer emergency responders alerted Congressman Larson to the fact that the tax abatements provided by local governments to volunteer firefighters as recruitment and retention incentives were being taxed by the IRS. In response, Congressman Larson immediately held a forum in his district to meet with community leaders and volunteer emergency responders to solicit ideas and input about how to best address this problem. As a result, Larson introduced the bill which amends the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow state and local governments the flexibility to develop beneficial tax incentives for volunteer firefighters and emergency medical personnel without federal interference.

The Act is supported by the International Association of Fire Chiefs, National Volunteer Fire Council, and the Congressional Fire Services Institute. To date, it is co-sponsored by over 57 Members of Congress, including the entire Connecticut Congressional delegation and ten members of the House Ways and Means Committee. The companion bill in the Senate is sponsored by Senator Chris Dodd.

"This bill reflects the valuable input I received through discussions with local volunteer fire fighters and directly responds to the needs and concerns of the emergency responders in my district, the State of Connecticut and across the country," said Congressman Larson.

“Volunteer first responders play a critical role in our communities. They are required to balance the increasing demands of their service with their families and full time careers. We hope that this Act will provide a small incentive to encourage continued volunteerism and service to our communities,” added Larson.

“Financial incentives are critical to the recruitment and retention of volunteer emergency responders. The cost of protecting these incentives is small, when you consider that volunteer firefighters alone save our local communities nearly \$37 billion a year,” said Chief Phillip Crombie of the South Windsor Fire Department.

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