

## LARSON OFFERS AMENDMENT TO AID MUNICIPALITIES AND LOCAL FIREFIGHTERS

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Effort Defeated Along Party-Lines In Science Committee Vote

WASHINGTON, D.C.- U.S. Congressman John B. Larson (CT-01) today offered an amendment to the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (H.R. 5005) in the House Science Committee which would have eliminated the requirement that matching funds be provided by localities for federal counter-terrorism training and equipment grants for firefighters. By ensuring that municipalities would receive grants through the Firefighter Assistance program without having to provide matching funds, Larson's amendment would have increased access to the grants and sped the delivery of funding to local fire departments. The Larson amendment was defeated in the committee along party lines, 16 to 17.

Larson stated: "When the aircraft struck the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11th, the first responders on the scene were not the FBI, the CIA, or even the military - it was local firefighters, police officers and emergency medical teams. Providing the necessary counter-terrorism training, equipment and communications to America's first responders must be our first priority as we build our homeland security."

"Our communities have collectively spent about \$1.5 billion nationwide in local taxpayer dollars since September 11th and the anthrax attacks. The simple truth is that our towns and cities long ago used up what limited resources they have available on overtime for emergency responders and stepped-up deployments due to heightened security. We cannot give those at war with the United States the opportunity to strike while our communities spend years saving enough money to pay the local match for federal grants to provide the training and equipment necessary to safeguard the American people today.

"We do not expect municipalities to provide matching funds to our military when they protect our national security and it is equally impractical to expect cities and towns to match funds to protect our homeland security where local firefighters and police officers represent our first line of defense against terrorist attacks," said Larson.

Opponents of the amendment on the committee suggested that the Administration would not require matching grants from states and municipalities for the president's \$3.5 billion first responders initiative. However, in a letter to Congressman Larson in March, Mitch Daniels, Director of the Office of Management and Budget at the White House, wrote that states will be required to contribute a 25 percent matching share.

Larson said he plans to raise the issue again with the Select Committee on Homeland Security.

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