

## LARSON FIRST RESPONDER PRIORITIES FUNDED IN DEFENSE AND HOMELAND SECURITY SPENDING BILL

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WASHINGTON, D.C.- The House of Representatives last night passed the conference report for the Defense and Homeland Security Supplemental Appropriations Act (H.R. 4775), containing significant funding for local police and fire departments that constitute America's first responders to acts of terrorism. The legislation includes funding to aid first responders through programs that are similar to those proposed in U.S. Congressman John B. Larson's (CT-01) Municipal Preparation and Strategic Response Act (H.R. 3161), introduced shortly after Sept. 11. It passed by a vote of 397 to 32.

Larson stated: "The provisions in this legislation begins the effort to ensure that our communities and first responders have the necessary equipment, training and communications capabilities to respond to an act of terrorism. We must meet our homeland defense needs by planning from the bottom up, focused on the municipal level with local firefighters, police officers and emergency medical teams, and this legislation is a strong step in the right direction. The key components contained in the legislation will go to ensuring that first responders have commonality and interoperability in their communications and provides funding to communities for disaster planning."

"The Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG), local officials, as well as fire and police chiefs deserve a great deal of credit and thanks for the valuable input they provided when this legislation was being written," said Larson.

The legislation includes \$201 million for Department of Justice First Responder grants, \$100 million for emergency preparedness grants for state and local governments through the Federal Emergency and Management Agency (FEMA) and \$150 million for FEMA's Fire Grant program of which \$50 million is dedicated to interoperable communications equipment for firefighters and emergency medical responders. Another \$50 million for communications interoperability technology and equipment was included in the COPS program and Department of Justice Assistance grants included an additional \$151 million in First Responder grants for equipment, security clearances, training and exercises.

In October of 2001, Larson introduced H.R. 3161 which would fund \$1.5 billion for local fire and police departments, emergency medical teams and health professionals through the Firefighter Assistance and COPS programs, and would not require communities to match federal funding.

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