

LARSON ANNOUNCES PROPOSED LEGISLATION TO PROTECT VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS AND EMTs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: August 1, 2002

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Proposed Bill Would Prevent IRS from Taxing Compensation for Services

SOUTH WINDSOR- U.S. Congressman John B. Larson (CT-01) today announced at South Windsor Fire Headquarters that he will propose legislation to protect local volunteer firefighters and emergency medical technicians (EMTs) from having the compensation many receive for their services taxed by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).

Currently, many Connecticut towns with volunteer emergency responders offer a small amount of compensation or a tax abatement to the volunteers because of the time and immense risk involved in their work - which the IRS has said they will begin counting as taxable income. Taxing this compensation may cause such benefits to be discontinued and will result in a decline in recruitment and retention of volunteer emergency responders in towns with volunteer services. Larson's proposed legislation would exempt compensation for local volunteer emergency responders, such as firefighters and EMTs, from being taxed. South Windsor first brought the problem to Larson's attention.

Larson stated: "Each day volunteer firefighters and EMTs give a great deal of their time and put their lives on the line in service to many of our communities, often for very little compensation. The small compensation or tax abatement many towns allow volunteer emergency responders should be free from taxation by the IRS to ensure that these towns have the resources to recruit and retain the number of volunteer firefighters and EMTs necessary to serve the community.

"Local emergency responders represent our first line of defense in situations ranging from a house fire to a medical emergency to an act of terrorism. As Congress and the Administration begin to direct funding to local first responders for training, equipment and communications capabilities, we must ensure that there are enough volunteers in our towns to actually utilize these resources, and I think this proposal will be an important step in that direction," said Larson.

Of the 20 cities and towns that make up the First Congressional District, most utilize either volunteer fire or EMT services, or both.

Larson is a leader in the effort to bring needed resources to municipalities and local first responders. Following September 11, he introduced the Municipal Preparation and Strategic Response Act to designate \$1.5 billion for training and equipment for local fire and police departments, emergency medical teams and health professionals as well as for local strategic response and emergency planning.

-30-