

DODD, LIEBERMAN AND LARSON CALL FOR PROTECTION OF

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DODD, LIEBERMAN AND LARSON CALL FOR PROTECTION OF TAX RELIEF FOR VOLUNTEER FIRST RESPONDERS

Measure Would Prevent IRS From Taxing Compensation for Service

SOUTH WINDSOR- Senators Christopher J. Dodd, Joseph I. Lieberman and U.S. Congressman John B. Larson announced today that they will introduce legislation that would prevent the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) from taxing the compensation awarded to local volunteer firefighters and emergency medical responders for service to their communities. Dodd, Lieberman and Larson first introduced the legislation in the last Congress and will reintroduce the bill when Congress reconvenes next week.

"Police officers, firefighters, and emergency service workers are America's front-line defenders in the face of fires, emergencies, terrorist threats, incidents with hazardous materials and other emergencies," said Dodd. "These incentives will help local governments recruit local volunteer firefighters and emergency medical responders in order to ensure their communities are adequately prepared to respond to emergencies."

"First responders make up the front lines in our homeland defense," Lieberman said. "Just as we're working in Washington to better coordinate federal homeland defense, we must help local personnel ensure the security of Connecticut's towns. This legislation will ease the financial burden on volunteer firefighters and medical personnel and make it easier for them to continue their brave work."

"Volunteer emergency responders hold an immeasurable importance for communities across Connecticut and throughout the nation," said Larson. "These volunteer firefighters and emergency medical personnel give their time and risk their lives each day to serve and protect our communities, often for little or no compensation. Volunteer firefighters and emergency medical personnel in every town are the nation's first line of defense when it comes to homeland security. The small tax abatements or benefits that these selfless men and women receive from their towns should remain free from taxation in thanks for their continued service and sacrifice."

Many Connecticut towns offer a property tax abatement made possible through a 1999 state law to volunteer firefighters and emergency medical personnel because of the time and risk their service demands - which the IRS has begun to count as taxable income. Taxing compensation may cause such benefits to be discontinued and may contribute to a decline in recruitment and retention of volunteer emergency responders in municipalities with volunteer services. The legislation introduced in the Senate by Dodd and Lieberman and in the House by Larson would exempt the compensation given to local volunteer emergency responders from being considered taxable income.

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