



NEW JERSEY GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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April 28, 2009

Governor Jon Corzine
State House
125 West State Street
PO Box 001
Trenton NJ 08625

Dear Governor Corzine:

I am writing on behalf of 368 volunteer first aid and rescue squads in the state of New Jersey to ask that you reconsider your \$4 million "reallocation" from the EMT Training Fund to the general treasury. I am fully aware that our state is in a financial crisis, but I respectfully submit to you this is not the place to cut funding.

As a life member of the Hackettstown First Aid and Rescue Squad, I am fully aware of the many hours of training these volunteers are required to take in order to help those who require emergency medical care. They give up their time not only to train but also to raise funds for needed equipment and supplies that municipalities and counties cannot afford. They often get up at all hours of the day and night to serve for no remuneration, no matter what the weather conditions may be. Often they are called away from their families in order to do this but it is a sacrifice they make to better their communities, counties and our state. Now you want to leave only \$400,000.00 for these responders to obtain required training. John Mateus of the NJ Medical Services Educator's Association is quoted, "EMTs might not be able to afford to pay for their training in this economy, which could put the burden of hiring paid emergency services on municipalities." Local municipalities and counties suffer enough burdens from state inflicted mandates. They do not need more!

I remember a picture of you being wheeled out of Cooper Hospital in Camden, NJ after you had recovered from the multiple surgeries you endured as a result of your motor vehicle accident in April, 2007. At that time, you thanked the many EMTs, rescue squad volunteers, police officers and troopers who helped you at the scene of the accident. Not everyone have a second car following them as you do. It was fortuitous that volunteer emergency medical technician, James Freund, came upon the scene and got out to assist in your care. I know times are tough but I also realize that you know firsthand the invaluable benefits these members provide. Taking this training funding is no way to treat these 20,000 first aid and rescue squad members.

As a legislator, I feel compelled to remind you that the EMT Training Fund is not tax revenue. It was established by an act of our state Legislature to cover the cost of training volunteers for EMT-basic

certification as well as the CEU training needed for recertification. The revenues for this fund come from Title 39 money as a surcharge of 50 cents on all moving violations. This fund does not have a surplus from which to take. I believe firmly that this money was dedicated for this specific purpose and should not be taken to relieve the State's budget shortfall.

There are other reasons not to take this \$4 million dollars from the EMT Training Fund.

1. A \$400,000.00 study commissioned by the Department of Health said the Fund was critical to the health of New Jersey's Emergency Medical Services and recommended expanding it.
2. EMTs and rescue squad members make our healthcare and domestic preparedness strong. All of the residents of New Jersey benefit but our state's proximity to New York City and Philadelphia make this even more imperative.
3. The EMT Fund has been used both as a recruitment and retention tool for many volunteer EMS agencies. According to Howard Meyer, Legislative Director of the New Jersey State First Aid Council, "the cost per training session can up to \$700". The Fund pays a maximum of \$550 per training session. Heaping the cost of training on emergency medical providers, in addition to the time they must spend training and responding may cause a serious shortfall of members needed to respond.
4. It is estimated that Volunteer EMS agencies save the taxpayers over \$500 million each year.

I respectfully request that you reconsider removing the \$4 million dollars from the EMT Training Fund. By doing so, you will ensure the safety of our residents and avoid making a short cited decision which will have long-term negative consequences. I look forward to your response on this matter.

Sincerely,



John DiMaio
Assemblyman, Legislative District 23

JD/nb/jd

cc: Warren County Board of Chosen Freeholders
Hunterdon County Board of Chosen Freeholders
Warren County and Hunterdon County Mayors and Elected Officials
New Jersey State First Aid Council
Paula Weiler, Vice President, Northern Area NJ First Aid Council
Sue Lothian, President, District 13 NJ First Aid Council
Mary Luster, President, District 10 NJ First Aid Council
Warren County and Hunterdon County Rescue Squads