

WASHINGTON – A bipartisan group of lawmakers introduced legislation this afternoon aimed at continuing federal tax breaks for volunteer firefighters and first responders throughout the country. The *Volunteer Responder Incentive Protection Act*, sponsored by U.S. **Reps John Larson (CT-01), Dave Reichert (WA-08), Tammy Baldwin (WI-02), and Tom Latham (IA-04)**, looks to help states and municipalities attract and retain first responders.

“The brave men and women that volunteer to put their well-being on the line every day for their families, friends and neighbors embody the best qualities of all Americans,” Congressman Larson said. “This legislation allows us to say thank you to them and encourage others throughout the country to follow their lead and volunteer to serve in their communities.”

“As a first responder for 33 years before coming to Congress and joining the tax-writing Ways and Means Committee, I will continue to work to see this important tax exemption preserved,” said Reichert. “I strongly support proposals that encourage this type of volunteerism by protecting first responders from taxes that are the result of their service. The volunteer first responders that work to keep our communities safe don’t ask for anything in return but I believe the least we can do for them is preserve the modest tax exemption they receive. It’s the right thing to do.”

“Volunteer firefighters and emergency responders provide an invaluable service to their communities and the American people,” said Congresswoman Baldwin. “I am pleased to join my colleagues in leading legislation that will benefit these brave Americans and encourage volunteer service across the country,” Baldwin said.

According to the National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC), volunteer first responders serve up to 38 percent of the population and save taxpayers roughly \$40 billion per year. The bill reauthorizes Rep. Larson’s original legislation, the Volunteer Responder Incentive Protection Act of 2007, which expired at the end of last year. Today’s legislation reestablishes the ability of volunteer firefighters and EMS personnel to exempt taxable benefits provided by state and local units of government until 2015, and increases the annual cap to \$600.

“Our community volunteer firefighters and emergency responders are the people we all look to for help and safety in times of crisis,” Congressman Latham said. “This legislation is a common-sense way to encourage the important work of our community first responders, and I’m

proud to work with my colleagues to help these selfless Americans.”

In a letter to the Members, the **Congressional Fire Service Institute, International Association of Fire Chiefs, National Association of Towns and Townships** and **National Volunteer Fire Council** offered support for the legislation:

“On behalf of the nation’s volunteer emergency responders and the communities that they protect, we applaud you for introducing this important legislation to prevent a tax increase on volunteer emergency responders and look forward to working with you to ensure its passage.”

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