



June 27, 2008

The Honorable Robert Casey
The United States Senate
Washington, DC 20010

Dear Senator Casey:

I am writing to thank you for introducing the Supporting America's Volunteer Emergency Services (SAVES) Act of 2008, and to express the full support of the National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) for the bill. The SAVES Act would provide assistance to volunteer fire and EMS departments struggling with the high cost of gasoline and diesel fuel, which has become a critical problem as prices at the pump have increased.

Volunteer firefighters and EMS personnel are the first responders to thousands of emergency calls every day. Close to 40 percent of the population lives in communities protected by all- or mostly-volunteer fire departments, mainly in rural or semi-rural areas where residents and structures are spread out over a large area. As a result, volunteers often have to drive long distances to respond to calls and attend training. To engage in fire suppression, departments have to use multiple apparatus to transport water to the fire ground if there is no local water supply present, which is often the case outside of urban and suburban communities.

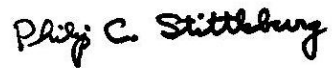
Because emergency response in rural areas is so fuel-intensive, volunteer departments are extremely vulnerable to spikes in the price of gas and diesel. This is exacerbated by the fact that many volunteer departments are already operating on shoestring budgets. Because volunteer departments have little to no personnel costs, almost all of their budget revenue is spent on operations. This saves local taxpayers across the country an estimated \$37.2 billion every year, but also means that even relatively small increases in operations costs can be significant when considered as part of the overall budget.

In *Fuel Costs Spur Firehouse Frugality*, an article that was published in The Wall Street Journal on June 18, 2008, author A.J. Miranda identifies multiple ways that cash-strapped volunteer fire departments have been dealing with high fuel costs, including dispatching fewer vehicles, restricting responses to certain areas, and increased reliance on private donations. None of these are long-term solutions and each of them comes with a cost to public safety.

By tying the price of gasoline and diesel fuel for volunteer fire departments to 2007 prices, the SAVES Act would provide much needed financial relief for departments struggling to afford the cost of providing service to their communities. Additionally, departments will be better able to budget for future fuel costs without having to factor for potential price spikes.

On behalf of the volunteer fire and emergency services of America, I'd like to thank you for introducing the SAVES Act and I look forward to working with you to see that it is passed into law.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Philip C. Stittleburg". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Philip C. Stittleburg
Chairman