



New York State Volunteer Ambulance and Rescue Association, Inc.

Committee for Legislative and Regulatory Affairs

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2012 LEGISLATIVE & POLICY AGENDA HIGHLIGHTS

NYSVARA's goal is the continued sustainability and evolution of emergency rescue and patient care in the non-profit, volunteer, and combination (departments of paid and volunteer staff) public safety organizations of New York State. The consistent and reliable delivery of these public safety elements is crucial to the well being of our communities and their residents.

The advocacy of legislation and public policy that supports these organizations and activities is a crucial element of our fulfillment of that goal. The financial challenges that our governments and citizens are experiencing further emphasize the importance of identifying methods and opportunities for fulfilling this mission that are effective, innovative, and cost efficient.

The initiatives comprising our legislative agenda have a few simple points of commonality:

1. They yield no additional expenses, directly or indirectly, to state or local governments.
2. They are crucial to sustaining the operation of EMS and rescue services in our communities

DIRECT INSURANCE REIMBURSEMENT

Require health insurance companies to pay ambulance services directly instead of sending payment to the patient.

Some insurance companies are demanding discounts from ambulance services. As a consequence for not receiving a discount some insurance companies then send payments to patients instead of the ambulance service. This delays the ambulances' receipt of payment, it increases administrative costs to track and recover the payment, and some payments never make it to the ambulance service.

SEAT BELT USE IN FIRE AND EMS VEHICLES

Amend the Vehicle & Traffic Law to eliminate the exemption provided to operators and front compartment passengers of authorized fire and EMS vehicles from the requirement to use seat belts.

Seat belts are a proven safety device; most ambulance and fire departments require personnel to use them whenever operating a department vehicle.

DEDICATED EMS TRAINING FUND

Continue the Dedicated Training Program Funding for EMS.

The Healthcare Reform Act provides funding for EMS training, Regional EMS Councils, Regional Program Agencies, and the New York State Department of Health's Bureau of EMS. This supports ongoing training and re-certification of EMTs, particularly volunteers.

EMERGENCY SERVICE VOLUNTEER TAX CREDIT

Continue the current Real Property Tax Abatement and the Personal Tax Credit for volunteer Fire and EMS responders.

This is a low cost way to thank and assist those that give up their time for training and responding to emergencies in their communities often incurring expenses as they do so. This is another important tool for the recruitment and retention of volunteer EMS providers.

AMBULANCE SUBSCRIPTION PROGRAM

Legitimize ambulance subscription programs.

Ambulance subscriptions provide a source of funding to EMS organizations before they respond to a call. They are especially important to those agencies serving areas with low population and call volume where the billing for calls will not cover operating expenses. Subscriptions also limit the out of pocket expenses of those using the services, which is important as health insurance coverage for ambulance service is declining.

WORKERS COMPENSATION/VAWBL REFORM

Reform the Volunteer Ambulance Workers Benefit Law so as not to punish EMS agencies comprised of both compensated and volunteer personnel.

Currently these combination organizations are paying workers compensation premiums twice; once for both the volunteer personnel and again for the career staff. This creates an added cost for having volunteer personnel, and is detrimental to their continued existence.

VOLUNTEER EMERGENCY SERVICES HIGHER EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIP

Continue the College Tuition Assistance Program for volunteer emergency services personnel.

Programs of this type have been recognized as a means to have the best trained and educated rescue and medical professionals possible to respond to your emergency. This type program supports two important public policy goals; it expands access to higher education, and it is a mechanism to recruit and retain community volunteer emergency service personnel.

LENGTH OF SERVICE AWARD PROGRAM REVISION (LOSAP)

Allow local LOSAP program sponsors to have an expanded range of entitlement ages for Volunteer Ambulance LOSAP programs.

LOSAP programs are critical to the recruitment and retention of volunteers. This change in the LOSAP law for ambulance organizations will create the opportunity for sponsors of local programs to offer options that yield parity with similar programs for volunteer firefighters.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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