

Issue number 3 is to foster the expansion of the Tuition Scholarship program for active volunteers in Fire and EMS at SUNY colleges and universities in the State, and to cut out the restriction of one scholarship per organization.

Issue 4: Medicaid reimbursement for ambulances. The fact is there's been no meaningful increase in reimbursement for 12 years, and responses to calls cost more than what is received. Victor's perception is that there are two choices: increase reimbursement rates, or begin to lose agencies that operate in high-density Medicaid populations.

Issue 5 is health care for volunteers. Victor noted again, Ulster County Ambulance Association's request for legislation to allow an association to offer health care to its volunteer members, similar to what Chamber of Commerce organizations are now allowed to do (because a pay check is involved).

Issue 6 is to update ALS intercepts with non-billing VACs. Seems non-billing VACs are in deep trouble because they cannot get reimbursed at this time. Before 1995, ALS intercepts billed and got paid.

Senator Bonacic, truly a good guy to fire and EMS volunteers, referred to volunteer ambulance personnel as "Angels of God." He supports health insurance for volunteers, and feels that there should be universal health coverage. He spoke briefly on tax exemptions for vollies, and feels that taking the \$200 state tax credit would work best. He also mentioned that community colleges in the area are offering Homeland Security credit courses. As a Senator, he gets \$2 million for discretionary spending, but has to spread that across 179 volunteer fire and EMS groups within his District. He suggested that the Legislators from cities have no comprehension of rural fire and EMS, hence, the fight goes on.

Newly elected NYS Assemblyman Mark Molinara of Dutchess, from Tivoli, was most outspoken. He's a member of the Tivoli's FD Fire Police, and his wife was a volunteer EMT. He expressed his opinion that the State needs to offer more training opportunities to volunteers, and needs to improve relations between volunteer fire and career personnel on local levels. He encouraged the volunteer sector to lobby State and Federal legislators.

Chris White, for Congressman Hinchey, spoke briefly on what's happening on the Federal level, noting there's keen competition for funding. He felt the prospects for getting the tax credit through Congress this year look better than before. He mentioned workshops forthcoming in February in Orange County pertaining to the Fire Grant Program.

Assemblywoman Nancy Calhoun said that State Assembly people only get \$40,000 to spend on "member items," unlike what Senators get. She's rather give funds to volunteer groups rather than school districts, and noted her grant to the Cornwall VAC last year. Nancy sits on the Ambulance Sub-Committee of the Assembly.

Sen. Bonacic rose again to say that a bill in the Senate should triple Star exemptions for property owners, noting that current property taxes have reached crisis proportions. The Senate passed a bill to eliminate school tax on the primary home owner.

Re Federal legislation, Chris White said new numbers will be assigned to Senate and House of Representative bills shortly.

A rep from Alamo Ambulance stood to suggest regional consortiums be established, such as is happening in Dutchess. By doing so, costs of supplies and equipment could be reduced.

A representative from a Rockland EMS organization rose to suggest to the legislators present, tht the NIMS courses are redundant and ridiculous.

One last thing. A representative of The New Paltz Rescue Squad talked about the volunteer organization's web site, and its membership application that is on the site. The way it's presented has helped to recruit new members. The preamble explains membership qualification, and the application can be filled out on line and submitted while on line. It has proved to be quite effective. The site is www.newpaltzrescue.org. Overall, the entire site is excellent, and its format is something we should consider.

By overall opinion of the breakfast was that the participation was good, but could have been better. Apparently, not enough people were aware of it taking place. Next year, should it get better, a larger facility will be needed. Interaction between people attending was good, those who spoke were good, and frankly, the exchange of ideas was good. Actually, the event could have lasted for several hours longer because of the participation and interaction with legislators, though more legislators could have been present. On a sad note, few HVREMSCO Officers attended.

Respectfully submitted:

Robert H. Ruston.