

Rep. Tangretti Remarks

Ft. Allen VFD

Oct. 10, 1992

(Usual Greetings and Acknowledgements)

I want to thank you for your generous invitation, your good company, and for the delicious dinner that surely deserves to be called a banquet.

It is a banquet in every way, and an appropriate tribute to the men and women who make up the Fort Allen Volunteer Fire Department.

Volunteerism in general, and volunteer fire companies in particular, have deep roots in American history that of our state.

Those who maintain the tradition of volunteerism...who work with our schools, youth programs, civic associations, charities, and our volunteer fire companies, are the bedrock and foundation of our communities.

They don't often make the newspaper headlines, or get interviewed on TV. And in the hustle and bustle of everyday life, their services are often overlooked by the average person.

But they, the volunteers, are the ones who make the good things happen in our communities, at great sacrifice to themselves. And they deserve every measure of recognition our communities can offer.

All of our volunteer service organizations are fulfilling important needs, but none regularly risk life and injury for the sake of their neighbors as you do.

Because of that, and because of the enormous sums volunteer fire companies save the taxpayers of Pennsylvania, the interests of community fire and rescue organizations occupy a high priority in the General Assembly.

Each session, dozens of legislative proposals are introduced to address issues and problems affecting organizations like yours.

This session, there are more than 30 bills and resolutions involving volunteer fire and rescue operations, and that's more than almost any other subject category listed in the legislative index.

Of course, we can always do more, and should do more, but I believe the legislative record on behalf of volunteer fire companies has been commendable.

And the fire companies here in the 57th District have been in the forefront of advancing that record.

The state loan program for fire and emergency services originated here in the 1970s under the sponsorship of my predecessor, Amos Hutchinson.

I've worked to sponsor and support efforts to improve the program like we did in 1990 by increasing the maximum loan amounts for new firefighting and emergency vehicles.

We've worked and campaigned for the statewide bond referendum to enlarge the low-interest loan fund so that more volunteer companies could qualify for more and larger loans.

As a result of these actions, local volunteer units now can borrow up to \$200,000 at 2 percent interest to modernize and expand their facilities and equipment.

Another advance for firefighters that originated here is House Bill 517. That bill is a proposal I introduced at the request of local volunteers to permit the use of firefighter relief funds for health and fitness programs, including fitness evaluation and monitoring, and to purchase equipment for the programs.

That bill received overwhelming approval by the House last March but has been lodged in the Senate -- like a lot of other good bills -- ever since.

The General Assembly also passed Act 46 this year, a bill that permits the state fire commissioner to recognize fire training certificates issued by other states.

*- Problem with Senate
Part - additional
funding program*

This can help the recruitment problems fire companies face by allowing experienced people who move here from out of state to become active firefighters in their new communities right away.

There are many other topics of concern to firefighters that are still being worked on in Harrisburg.

Issues such as helping finance hazardous materials incident training and equipment...and seeing to it that while our firefighters get the training they need, the requirements don't place so much of a burden on individuals that they are deterred from joining up.

- Also ~~was~~ related indirectly
Problem with By-pass & Ret 136
- Job Structure -

As I finish, I'd like to get back to this matter of recognition for volunteer service that I mentioned earlier.

Though many may not be aware of it, virtually everyone in Pennsylvania is dependent on volunteer firefighters and rescue squad members for their safety.

Even those living in communities served by paid services will certainly travel through areas of the Commonwealth that are protected by volunteers.

It's essential that the state work as closely as possible with our dedicated volunteers to continue their tradition of providing the best possible fire and rescue services.

It's a fact that the 57th Legislative District representative and its firefighters have provided the leadership in that effort.

That's been our legacy to the 3000 or more volunteer fire companies around the state and the communities that depend on them.

I can't think of a more valuable contribution than that, the one you've made, to the people of Pennsylvania.

And with your help, as your representative, I intend to continue it.