

Rep. Tangretti Remarks

Greensburg Fire Co. #8

Jan. 16, 1993

(Usual Greetings and Acknowledgements)

Thank you for your welcome invitation to meet again with the members of Greensburg Fire Co. Number 8.

Just as you are starting a new year and looking forward to changes in your activities and programs in the months ahead, we in the legislature are engaged in a similar process.

We have a new leadership alignment in the state Senate that puts that body in the same column politically with the governor and

*- PRES. of Phos. & Co's Official Family
Officers & Member's Co. #8
L & G
After present/monetary
grants to Wayne & Turk
etc! mainly*

the majority party of the House -- all unified politically for the first time in more than a decade.

And we have a new leadership lineup in the House of Representatives...a new Speaker, new Majority Leader and several other new faces in leadership posts.

*Speaker's Room
Public Policy*

While there are changes taking place in the legislature, it's a little too early to say with any certainty what these changes will mean for legislative policy in general.

I think I can say pretty confidently though, that none of these changes would

adversely affect the interests of volunteer firefighters.

And the reason I say that is because issues of public safety and the interests of community volunteer firefighters rise above purely partisan considerations such as the kind of changes we're seeing now in the legislature.

Interests such as yours are supported pretty much uniformly across party lines and from year to year in each and every legislative session regardless of who's in control.

And that's as it should be, because your mission in our communities goes well beyond partisan politics to the matters that are the

most urgent of our personal concerns -- our own lives and safety and those of our children, families and neighbors.

The fact that volunteer fire company interests occupy a high priority in the General Assembly is attested by dozens of legislative proposals introduced each session on their behalf.

In the last session, there were more than 30 bills and resolutions involving fire, ambulance and rescue operations. That's more than almost any other subject category listed in the legislative index.

The landmark program the legislature

created for volunteer services, of course, is the volunteer loan program established in the 1970s.

Since it began, it has made close to 4000 low-interest loans throughout the state totaling about \$120 million.

In the past year we were able to complete the legislation, first approved in 1990, to expand the loan fund to \$50 million from \$25 million.

Signed by the governor last March, Act 4 of 1992 also increased the borrowing limits for equipment and structures, and extended the repayment terms of loans to as long as 15

years for the largest loan amounts.

As successful as it has been, the volunteer loan program is experiencing some problems, administratively and financially, that need to be resolved, and I hope we can make some progress toward that in the new legislative session.

Because of those problems, I'm told that there is a growing backlog of pending loans -- now numbering about 160 that are waiting to be processed.

As a result, any loan applications submitted today would take close to a year and a half for the applicant to receive a loan check.

That's a condition that clearly needs to

be fixed legislatively and probably will be

when we tried to do at the end of last session
among the first issues to be addressed in the

Still a lot of resentment and suspicion - even after explaining to member in my district - other members still against - so never came to floor - negotiations ongoing - \$300,000, 4% - 3 YRS
new session.

Jackie's
Bill #300,000
7% / YR
amended for
Salaries - 4% loan
Program - only
subset

Another bill that involves matters closer

to home, and one that I have worked for as its

prime sponsor, is the legislation I introduced to

provide access to physical fitness and health

conditioning for volunteers. (Describe bill and

its 1991-92 outcome and intentions for coming

session.)

192-2 - passed House
in March - but languished
and ultimately died in Senate

Many of you are also aware of the

damage some of the nearby communities in

HB 517 -
To maintain com-
prehensive health,
physical fitness and
physical conditioning
programs that provide
for physical fitness
activities, nutrition
education and in-
struction and in-
and fitness evaluation
shall be approved by
the nearest state health
health care facility
whom is authorized
to provide such service.

the district suffered last summer from storms

and flash flooding.

more specifically the first week of July - primarily in the Colton area -

Some of the people who had damages

were helped by a low-interest loan program a S.W.

local bank developed to help them repair and

replace damaged property.

But none of the affected residents were

able to qualify for state or federal disaster

assistance, a problem *We're* I'm working to correct

with the assistance of PEMA.

The extent of the damage, in total

magnitude and in individual cases, was not

considered great enough to qualify for aid.

As a result, no help was provided to the

*lowest disaster
declaration SBA -
Need
25 business
or residences
40% loss
of market value
- including busi-
ness financing -*

local property owners who had extensive damage to their homes, furnishings and personal effects.

(Here describe disaster relief bill.)

\$ 1,000,000 approx - low interest revolving loan program - which requires only 5% dwelling with such damage - would be administered by the PEMA and the PA Housing Finance Agency

I know the volunteer firemen of this community strongly supported the volunteer loan fund program from its beginnings through the various amendments and improvements that were made since the program started in the Seventies.

You also supported the physical fitness bill, and I hope I can anticipate your continuing support for that bill and for some form of assistance for victims of localized

disasters.

It isn't only in responding to emergencies that volunteer organizations like yours contribute to public safety...although that is critical.

Your organizations also contribute through public education programs -- encouraging the use of smoke detectors, for example.

And you contribute through your support for state and local programs and legislation that promote public safety objectives...on issues such as transportation of hazardous materials, safe building and wiring codes, and

protections against flammable or dangerous
substances in the home.

By broadening your mission to areas of
public education and to encouraging
government actions that promote public safety,
you are saving lives and property just as surely
as if you were responding to an alarm...and all
citizens of the Commonwealth are in your debt
for it.

Thank you.