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CHESCO FIRE POLICE ASSOCIATION

(RESPOND TO THE INTRODUCTION)

I'M ALWAYS HONORED TO BE GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO TALK WITH VOLUNTEERS--A GROUP WHICH I CONSIDER TO BE AN IMPORTANT CORNERSTONE IN OUR SOCIETY.

VOLUNTEERS LEND THE HELPING HAND, RESPOND UNSELFISHLY TO THE CALL FOR HELP, AND PERFORM THE ULTIMATE HUMAN SERVICE DEED OF "DOING UNTO OTHERS..."

VOLUNTEERS CAN BE FOUND IN NURSING HOMES, HOSPITALS, CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS, YOUTH GROUPS, CHURCHES, SCHOOLS AND MANY OTHER PLACES WITHIN OUR SOCIETY. ALL ARE IMPORTANT, AND ALL MAKE TREMENDOUS CONTRIBUTIONS TO THEIR FELLOW MAN AND THIS NATION BY GIVING OF THEIR TIME AND TALENTS.

I DON'T MEAN TO RATE THE IMPORTANCE OF VOLUNTEERS, BECAUSE ALL HAVE A ROLE AND ARE DESPERATELY NEEDED. BUT THIS ^{afternoon} ~~EVENING~~ I DO WANT TO EMPHASIZE THE VITAL ROLE THAT EMERGENCY SERVICE VOLUNTEERS PLAY IN OUR LIVES.

PAGE -2-

WHEN I THINK OF THE FIREFIGHTER, THE FIRE POLICE VOLUNTEER, THE AMBULANCE ATTENDANT...WORDS LIKE "UNSELFISH" AND "RELIABLE"... COME TO MIND. THESE ARE LABELS THAT I'M SURE EACH OF YOU WEAR PROUDLY, AND YOU DESERVE CHESTER COUNTY'S DEEP APPRECIATION FOR MEASURING UP TO THE STIFF REQUIREMENTS OF VOLUNTEERING. YOU ARE THE PEOPLE THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE; YOU MAKE THAT DIFFERENCE THROUGH ACTIONS. FOR SOME, IT'S GREAT TO TALK A GOOD GAME OF HELPING OTHERS BUT THEY HAVE DIFFICULTY PUTTING THEIR WORDS INTO ACTION.

THOSE OF YOU HERE ^{*This afternoon*} TONIGHT KNOW OF THE DIFFICULTIES AND OBSTACLES THAT ONE MUST OVERCOME IN ORDER TO BE A VOLUNTEER IN THE TRUE "ACTION-SENSE" OF THE WORD.

PENNSYLVANIA IS FORTUNATE IN THAT NEARLY 100,000 INDIVIDUALS HAVE ANSWERED THE CALL AS FIRE SAFETY AND FIREFIGHTING VOLUNTEERS. THOSE OF YOU HERE THIS ^{*Afternoon*} ~~EVENING~~ ARE PART OF A SELECT AND IMPORTANT GROUP KNOWN AS THE FIREFIGHTERS.

THE PENNSYLVANIA FIRE POLICE ASSOCIATION SAYS THERE ARE SOME 40,000 FIRE POLICE IN PENNSYLVANIA. THAT'S A SIZEABLE NUMBER...A NUMBER THAT GENERATES HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF HOURS OF SERVICE EACH YEAR FOR THIS STATE.

PAGE -3-

I KNOW--AND YOU WELL KNOW--THAT VOLUNTEERS, NO MATTER WHAT THE SITUATION, SELDOM RECEIVE THE RECOGNITION OR SUPPORT THEY DESERVE. SOME OF THIS STATE'S MOST DEDICATED YET LEAST RECOGNIZED SERVANTS ARE THE FIRE POLICE.

FIRE POLICE OFTEN ANSWER THE CALL IN EMERGENCY SITUATIONS WITHIN COMMUNITIES RANGING FROM NATURAL DISASTERS SUCH AS FLOODING TO MAN-CAUSED PROBLEMS SUCH AS VANDALISM OR CROWD CONTROL.

MOST COMMUNITIES RELY ON FIRE POLICE TO MAN THE STREETS WHEN COMMUNITY CELEBRATIONS ARE HELD. YOU'RE OFTEN A VISIBLE AND WELCOME PRESENCE AT TOWN PARADES, COUNTY FAIRS OR LOCAL SPORTING EVENTS.

BUT BY FAR YOUR LARGEST CONTRIBUTIONS COME WHILE YOUR FELLOW FIREFIGHTERS ARE RESPONDING TO A FIRE OR RELATED EMERGENCY CALL. THE FIRE POLICE REPRESENT THE FIRST LINE OF "ATTACK" IN THAT RESPONSE. IF THE FIRE APPARATUS CANNOT MAKE IT TO THE SCENE IN A TIMELY AND ORDERLY FASHION, PROPERTY IS LOST AND LIVES ARE ENDANGERED.

PAGE -4-

YOU PROVIDE THAT ALL-IMPORTANT LINK BETWEEN FIREHOUSE AND EMERGENCY SITE.

YOU TAKE TO THE STREETS TO CALM A SITUATION THAT OFTEN EVOKES PANIC, RECKLESSNESS AND JUST PLAIN NOSINESS BY JOHN Q. PUBLIC.

I'VE OFTEN NOTICED THAT DOGS BARK AND HOWL ALONG WITH THE FIRE SIREN, AND I'M SURE MANY OF YOU WOULD AGREE THAT THE FIRE WHISTLE OFTEN HAS A STRANGE AND SCARY AFFECT ON SOME PEOPLE AS WELL. FORTUNATELY FOR THE COMMUNITY AT LARGE, YOU RESPOND IMMEDIATELY TO BRING A SEMBLANCE OF ORDER AND CALM TO THE SITUATION.

BASICALLY, WHAT I'M SAYING IS THAT YOU DO A FINE JOB UNDER CONDITIONS THAT ARE ANYTHING BUT IDEAL. AND ALTHOUGH YOU DON'T OFTEN RECEIVE THE "THANK YOU" OR PAT ON THE BACK THAT YOU DESERVE, I WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT MOST EVERY CHESTER COUNTIAN IS AWARE OF YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS, YOUR SACRIFICES AND SERVICE.

YES, THE GENERAL PUBLIC--MYSELF INCLUDED--TOO OFTEN TAKES THE VOLUNTEER FOR GRANTED. LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND THE STATE OFTEN TAKE THE VOLUNTEER EMERGENCY GROUP FOR GRANTED, OFTEN LEAVING YOU ALONE TO FEND FOR YOURSELVES AND STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL.

PAGE -5-

IT'S A CONSTANT STRUGGLE FOR SOME VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANIES AND AMBULANCE SQUADS TO STAY AFLOAT, BOTH FINANCIALLY AND MANPOWER WISE. WE'VE BEEN FORTUNATE HERE IN CHESTER COUNTY IN THAT THE SPIRIT OF VOLUNTEERISM SEEMS TO SHINE, BUT WE MUST NOT TAKE THE VOLUNTEER OR THE VOLUNTEER EMERGENCY GROUP FOR GRANTED!

(PAUSE)

IT IS FOR THIS REASON THAT I'M PROUD TO NOTE SEVERAL WAYS IN WHICH THE COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA AND THE PENNSYLVANIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY ARE WORKING TO LEND YOU A DESERVED HAND OF SUPPORT.

**EMS... THE EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES SYSTEM, MANY OF YOU ARE FAMILIAR WITH THIS PROGRAM, AND I'D LIKE TO UPDATE YOU ON SOME VERY IMPORTANT IMPROVEMENTS THAT HAVE BEEN MADE TO IT RECENTLY.

EMS WAS ESTABLISHED IN THE 1970s TO COORDINATE EMERGENCY SERVICES BY OFFERING CENTRALIZED PLANNING, DISPATCHING AND OTHER BENEFITS SUCH AS "911." THE LAW WAS REWRITTEN IN 1985, AND I'M PROUD TO SAY THAT I PLAYED A ROLE IN REDRAFTING THE LAW AT THAT TIME. UNDER THE 1985 LAW, A \$10 FEE WAS TO BE ASSESSED TO ALL MOVING TRAFFIC VIOLATIONS.

PAGE -6-

THESE MONIES WERE EARMARKED TO ASSIST LOCAL EMERGENCY ORGANIZATIONS ACROSS THE STATE. UNFORTUNATELY, PENNDOT'S INTERPRETATION OF THE LAW WAS SO NARROW THAT THE ANTICIPATED \$10 MILLION ANNUAL REVENUE WAS NEVER GENERATED.

MOREOVER, THE HEALTH DEPARTMENT AND THE ADMINISTRATION SAT ON THE \$7 MILLION THAT WAS ACCUMULATED... REFUSING TO APPROPRIATE IT TO EMERGENCY ORGANIZATIONS.

IN SHORT, IT WAS A BUMBLING BUREAUCRATIC EPISODE OF THE WORST KIND. MONIES EARMARKED TO HELP PENNSYLVANIA'S VOLUNTEER EMERGENCY SERVICE GROUPS WERE NOT GETTING TO THEM... AND THERE WAS NO EXCUSE FOR IT.

I'M PLEASED TO REPORT THAT CORRECTIVE STEPS HAVE BEEN TAKEN THROUGH THE RECENTLY ENACTED ACT 121 OF 1988 SIGNED INTO LAW ON OCTOBER 21. THIS ACT DOES SEVERAL THINGS THAT WILL BE OF BENEFIT TO EMERGENCY SERVICE VOLUNTEERS:

FIRST--IT SPECIFIES JUST WHAT A MOVING VIOLATION IS SO THAT PENNDOT AND ALL LAW ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL KNOW WHICH VIOLATIONS SHOULD BE ASSESSED THE \$10 FEE. SIMPLY PUT, THE \$10 EMS FEE APPLIES TO ALL MOTOR VEHICLE LAW VIOLATIONS OTHER THAN A PARKING TICKET.

SECONDLY--MONIES ACCUMULATED IN THE FUND WILL BE APPROPRIATED ANNUALLY TO THE HEALTH DEPARTMENT SPECIFICALLY FOR DISTRIBUTION TO LOCAL EMERGENCY GROUPS. THIS LANGUAGE WILL LEAVE NO QUESTIONS OR LEEWAY FOR THE BUREAUCRATS TO AVOID THIS RESPONSIBILITY.

FINALLY, THE NEW LAW RESTORES \$1.5 MILLION IN GENERAL FUND MONIES FOR EMS.

THE RESTORED FUNDING IS IN ADDITION TO A STANDING \$6 MILLION APPROPRIATION. THIS BRINGS EMERGENCY SERVICE STATE ASSISTANCE TO \$7.5 MILLION FOR THE CURRENT 1988-89 FISCAL YEAR--UP BY \$2.6 MILLION SINCE 1985. IN ADDITION, THE EMS \$10 TRAFFIC VIOLATION FEE WILL PROVIDE EVEN MORE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE.

SO, WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR OUR VOLUNTEER UNITS? HOPEFULLY, THESE BEEFED UP STATE APPROPRIATIONS WILL HELP LOCAL UNITS COVER COSTS OF TRAINING, ASSIST WITH FUNDRAISING ACTIVITIES AND PURCHASE PROGRAMS.

YOU AND I BOTH KNOW THAT MONEY CANNOT BUY VOLUNTEERS. A VOLUNTEER IS A SPECIAL BREED OF INDIVIDUAL... HE OR SHE EITHER HAS WHAT IT TAKES, OR THEY DON'T. THEY EITHER WANT TO -- AND FIND THE TIME TO -- HELP, OR THEY DON'T.

PAGE -8-

MORE STATE MONEY CAN HELP LOCAL UNITS USE THEIR MANPOWER MORE EFFECTIVELY BY POSSIBLY EASING THE NEED FOR AS MANY FUNDRAISING EFFORTS, BUT IT WON'T SOLVE THE SHORTAGE OF VOLUNTEERS THAT MANY UNITS ARE EXPERIENCING. THAT, MY FRIENDS, IS A CALLING THAT EACH PERSON MUST FACE AND ANSWER IN HIS OR HER OWN WAY.

PERHAPS WE CAN--BOTH ON A STATE AND LOCAL LEVEL--DO A BETTER JOB OF INFORMING THE PUBLIC THAT VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED **INDEED ARE A MUST** IF LIFE AND PROPERTY-SAVING SERVICES ARE TO CONTINUE. THE RIGHT MESSAGE OFTEN CAN STIR SOME TO PARTICIPATE WHO OTHERWISE MAY NOT SEE A NEED.

(PAUSE)

ANOTHER RECENTLY ENACTED LAW IS OFTEN REFERRED TO AS THE "FIREMEN'S BILL OF RIGHTS." IT'S ACT 87 OF 1988, AND IT EXTENDS THE LIFE OF THE PENNSYLVANIA EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY (PEMA) FOR ANOTHER FIVE YEARS. ACT 87 ALSO ESTABLISHES THE OFFICE OF FIRE SAFETY SERVICES AS A FORMAL POSITION BY MANDATE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY. THE POST HAS BEEN IN EXISTENCE AT THE PLEASURE OF THE GOVERNOR SINCE THE MID-1970s... BUT IT HAD NO REAL LEGISLATIVE GUARANTEES OR POWERS.

PAGE -9-

I'M HOPEFUL THAT THIS NEW OFFICIAL STATUS WILL ENABLE THE OFFICE TO BECOME A BIT MORE INDEPENDENT OF THE ADMINISTRATION... AND CONSEQUENTLY MORE OUTSPOKEN IN BEHALF OF THE FIREFIGHTERS AND FIRE POLICE WHO WORK SO HARD FOR THEIR FELLOW CITIZENS.

(PAUSE)

HOUSE BILL 1011 IS ANOTHER MEASURE THAT HAS UNANIMOUSLY BEEN APPROVED BY THE HOUSE. IT CURRENTLY AWAITS SENATE ACTION. THE MEASURE WOULD IMPLEMENT SAFEGUARDS FOR VOLUNTEER FIRE SERVICE PERSONNEL WHO RESPOND TO THE CALL FOR HELP AND AS A RESULT MISS TIME ON THE JOB.

THE BILL, IF ENACTED, WOULD PROTECT AN EMPLOYEE FROM BEING DISCRIMINATED AGAINST AS A RESULT OF HIS OR HER MISSED WORK DUE TO EMERGENCY SERVICE ACTIVITIES. IT FURTHER WOULD EXPAND PROTECTION FOR THOSE VOLUNTEERS WHO MISS WORK FOR EXTENDED PERIODS BECAUSE OF AN INJURY RESULTING FROM FIRE FIGHTING SERVICE. I'M HOPEFUL THAT THE SENATE WILL MOVE THIS BILL TO THE GOVERNOR BEFORE THE END OF THE CURRENT LEGISLATIVE SESSION.

(PAUSE)

THERE ARE SEVERAL OTHER BILLS OF INTEREST TO VOLUNTEERS, INCLUDING ONE THAT WOULD INCREASE LOAN LIMITS FOR FIRE COMPANIES AND AMBULANCE SQUADS UNDER THE LOW-INTEREST VOLUNTEER LOAN PROGRAM.

Good News SB 997 - allows each volunteer fire company to set up independent retirement plans utilizing Act 84 funds -

Maybe bad news BUT ONE MAJOR PIECE OF LEGISLATION THAT MOST EVERY VOLUNTEER IS KEEPING AN EYE ON IS THE "SMALL GAMES OF CHANCE" BILL.

AS YOU KNOW, IT WAS PASSED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND SENT TO THE GOVERNOR IN OCTOBER. GOV. CASEY--AFTER CONSIDERABLE REVIEW--VETOED THE BILL.

NOW, I KNOW THAT SOME PROPONENTS OF THIS PARTICULAR VERSION OF A SMALL GAMES OF CHANCE BILL IMMEDIATELY SAY THAT CASEY AND ALL LEGISLATORS WHO HAVE HAD RESERVATIONS ABOUT THE BILL ARE ENEMIES OF FIRE COMPANIES, LODGES, AND OTHER LOCAL VOLUNTEER GROUPS.

I'M HERE TO SAY THAT SUCH CHARGES ARE RIDICULOUS--AND I DON'T TAKE KINDLY TO THEM. I'LL STACK MY RECORD ON BEHALF OF VOLUNTEER SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS--ESPECIALLY THE FIRE COMPANIES AND AMBULANCE SQUADS--AGAINST ANYONE.

PAGE -11-

I HAVE WORKED ESPECIALLY HARD TO GAIN MILLIONS OF DOLLARS IN NEW STATE FUNDING FOR THESE ORGANIZATIONS. ~~THIS, I FIND SOME OF THESE COMMENTS MOST OFFENSIVE.~~

I WOULD, HOWEVER, LIKE TO TAKE THIS TIME TO ADDRESS YOU--FACE-TO-FACE--AND LET YOU KNOW EXACTLY WHERE I STAND ON THE SMALL GAMES OF CHANCE ISSUE.

I MUST BE FORTHRIGHT AND TELL YOU THAT I AM NOT AN ADVOCATE OF GAMBLING, THE HORROR STORIES OF FINANCIAL LOSSES... PERSONAL LOSSES... FAMILY HARDSHIPS... AND SOCIETAL PROBLEMS BROUGHT ABOUT BY CASINO GAMBLING IN ATLANTIC CITY ARE WELL DOCUMENTED.

HOWEVER, I AM A REALIST IN THAT I KNOW PUNCHBOARDS, RAFFLES, ETC. HAVE BEEN GOING ON... AND WILL CONTINUE IN PENNSYLVANIA REGARDLESS OF THE LAW. INDEED, SUCH EFFORTS PROVIDE VOLUNTEER GROUPS WITH NEEDED FUNDS.

NOW, IF I MAY, I'D LIKE TO EXPRESS MY MAJOR OBJECTION TO THE SMALL GAMES OF CHANCE BILL THAT WAS PASSED AND VETOED. FRANKLY, IT CONTAINS LANGUAGE THAT GOES BEYOND THE REALM OF PROVIDING FIRE COMPANIES WITH SMALL GAMES AUTHORITY.

PAGE -12-

QUITE SIMPLY, THE SMALL GAMES OF CHANCE BILL--AS CURRENTLY WRITTEN-- IS A WELL-DONE DISGUISE ON BEHALF OF PRO-GAMBLING FORCES THAT WANT TO SEE OFF-TRACK BETTING, CASINO GAMBLING AND THE LIKES IN THE COMMONWEALTH.

THE LANGUAGE PROVIDES THESE FACTIONS WITH THE OPENINGS THEY HAVE BEEN SEEKING TO INVADE PENNSYLVANIA.

YOU AND I BOTH KNOW THAT WITHOUT HONESTY AND REGULATION, GAMBLING QUICKLY CAN BECOME A MAJOR RIP-OFF. PENNSYLVANIA DOES NOT NEED THE LAW ENFORCEMENT PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH THE BIG-TIME GAMBLING FACTIONS... NOR DOES ITS PEOPLE NEED THE PERSONAL LOSSES ASSOCIATION WITH SUCH OPERATIONS.

CONSEQUENTLY, GOV. CASEY HAS PROPOSED A REDRAFTING OF THE SMALL GAMES OF CHANCE BILL TO ENSURE THAT BLANK CHECKS ARE NOT WRITTEN TO THE WRONG PEOPLE. LANGUAGE MUST BE INCLUDED TO LIMIT GROWTH OF GAMBLING AND TO KEEP A TIGHT LID ON MANUFACTURERS AND DISTRIBUTORS OF THESE PRODUCTS.

--THE GREATEST REWARD FOR SERVING OTHERS IS THE SATISFACTION FOUND
IN YOUR OWN HEART.

--SERVICE IS THE RENT WE PAY FOR THE SPACE WE OCCUPY IN THIS WORLD.

--THERE ARE NOT GREAT MEN EXCEPT THOSE WHO HAVE RENDERED SERVICE TO MANKIND.

AND FINALLY THIS,

"THE MEASURE OF A MAN IS NOT THE NUMBER OF SERVANTS HE HAS, BUT
THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE HE SERVES."

AS I STATED EARLIER, IT TAKES A SPECIAL PERSON TO VOLUNTEER HIS OR HER TIME.
IT'S NOT FUN TO ANSWER THE CALL AT 2 A.M. ON A ZERO DEGREE WINTER NIGHT. IT'S NOT ALL
THAT ENJOYABLE TO EXTEND THE HELPING HAND ONLY TO HAVE OTHERS RIDICULE IT. IT'S NOT
FUN TO PUT YOUR OWN HEALTH AND SAFETY ON THE LINE.

*9:00 AM
1/23/13*

ON THE SURFACE, THE SMALL GAMES OF CHANCE BILL FOR VETERANS CLUBS AND FIRE COMPANIES SOUNDS HARMLESS... ALL IT WOULD DO IS LEGALIZE WHAT HAS BEEN TAKING PLACE. TRUE. BUT, AND THIS IS A MAJOR "BUT," WE MUST BE ON GUARD AGAINST THOSE WHO ARE TRYING TO USE THE FIRE COMPANIES AND VETERANS AS NOTHING MORE THAN A VEHICLE TO OPENING THE FLOODGATES TO CASINO AND OTHER BIG-TIME GAMBLING IN PENNSYLVANIA.

I THANK YOU FOR ALLOWING ME TO STATE MY POSITION ON THIS TOPIC, AND I'M HOPEFUL THAT YOU SEE THE COMPLEXITY OF THIS ISSUE. WE MUST GUARD AGAINST THE UNDESIRABLE ELEMENT THAT ONCE IN IS DIFFICULT TO CONTROL AND ELIMINATE. WHEN WE HAVE A BILL THAT PROVIDES THESE PROTECTIONS, I WILL UNDOUBTEDLY SUPPORT IT. BUT I CANNOT ALLOW THESE ELEMENTS TO USE OUR VOLUNTEERS AS A VEHICLE FOR THEIR OWN BIG-TIME GAMBLING PURPOSES.

(PAUSE)

IN CLOSING, I JUST WANT TO EMPHASIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUR SERVICE ON BEHALF OF OTHERS.

HERE ARE A FEW STATEMENTS THAT REALLY SAY IT ALL ABOUT SERVING AND VOLUNTEERING.

PAGE -15-

BUT THOSE WHO TRULY VOLUNTEER FOR THE RIGHT REASONS KNOW ONE THING. THEY
KNOW THAT HELPING OTHERS IS PERSONALLY REWARDING. AND THEY KNOW THAT THEY ARE DOING
SOMETHING TO IMPROVE THIS LIFE FOR OTHERS.

IN MY VIEW... THAT'S SOMETHING.

THAT'S SOMETHING TO BE MIGHTY PROUD OF. THANK YOU.

-END-