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**DODD, COLLINS INTRODUCE BILL TO HELP RETAIN VOLUNTEER
EMERGENCY RESPONDERS**

*Legislation would protect tax benefits that help recruit, retain
volunteer emergency responders*

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Senator Chris Dodd (D-CT) and Senator Susan Collins (R-ME) today introduced legislation that would protect tax benefits that are critical to recruiting and retaining volunteer emergency responders.

“Volunteer firefighters and first responders often balance full-time careers and family obligations with service to their communities,” **said Dodd**. “Requiring these brave and selfless volunteers to pay taxes on the benefits they receive creates a disincentive for them to serve. This legislation will help maintain strong and well-staffed first responder departments in the face of local and state budget cuts that have forced many to reduce their numbers.”

Senator Susan Collins said: “I’m proud to join Senator Dodd in introducing this important legislation, which will provide tax relief to hundreds of thousands of volunteer firefighters throughout the nation, including thousands in the state of Maine. These devoted men and women have volunteered to be on call to protect their communities, putting themselves into harm’s way as first-responders. Maine boasts one of the highest percentages of volunteer firefighters in the nation, a testament to our state’s civic involvement and commitment. This legislation would extend needed assistance and relief to these volunteer firefighters, who provide an essential safety and protection system for their communities.”

“America’s volunteer firefighters and EMS personnel are our neighbors, friends and family, who give their time and effort to better their communities and keep us all safe. I am greatly appreciative for the work of Senators Dodd and Collins in introducing the Volunteer Responder Incentive Reauthorization Act and look forward to working with them on its passage. They understand that the incentives provided to volunteer responders are neither flashy nor lucrative, but serve as a small way for communities to offer thanks for a job well done,” **said Chief Timothy S. Wall, a member of the North Farms Volunteer Fire Department in Wallingford and chair of the IAFC Volunteer and Combination Officers Section (VCOS).**

To help recruit and retain volunteer fire fighters and EMS personnel, state and local governments provide a number of incentives to these first responders, including reduced property taxes and other benefits. In 2002, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) deemed incentives such as these as income and therefore subject to federal taxation.

Due to this decision, volunteer personnel in many states were obligated to pay taxes on these incentives. In 2007, Senator Dodd and Senator Collins worked to enact the original *Volunteer Responder Incentive Protection Act* (S. 1466) and ultimately had the provisions of the bill included in the *Mortgage Forgiveness Debt Relief Act of 2007*. This legislation protected many of these volunteer benefits from taxation by excluding property tax abatements and up to \$360 per year in other forms of compensation from an individual's taxable income.

The Dodd and Collins bill builds upon the success of the original legislation, which expires at the end of this year, so that fire departments can continue to attract enough volunteers to meet the first responder needs of their cities and towns. Under the legislation, the *Volunteer Responder Incentive Protection Reauthorization Act of 2010*, property tax abatements and up to \$600 per year in volunteer personnel compensation would be exempt from federal taxation for an additional three years.