

Washington, DC -- Today, U.S. Representative Michael A. Arcuri (D-Utica) announced \$72,295 for the Pittsfield Fire Department in New Berlin through the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program (AFGP).

"Grants like this one help local first responders improve their already heroic efforts to protect our families and keep our communities safe," **said Arcuri, a member of the Congressional Fire Services Caucus**. "I am thrilled to announce federal funding to help the Pittsfield Fire Department upgrade its capabilities and continue to serve this area with such dedication and skill. I know how crucial it is to fully fund first responders and ensure that New York gets the federal funds it needs and deserves. In Congress, I have joined colleagues on both sides of the aisle to increased funding for this important grant program and help volunteer first responders with overdue tax relief."

The Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program (AFGP) awards grants to firefighters, emergency response personnel and first responders to enhance response capabilities and to more effectively protect the health and safety of first responders and the citizens in their communities. AFGP grants provide resources for training, first responder health and safety programs, and response equipment and vehicles.

Since 2004, AFGP has provided a total of almost \$2.2 billion nationwide to first-responder organizations to purchase response equipment, personal protective equipment, and vehicles. In fiscal year 2007, AFGP will award approximately \$490 million directly to fire departments and EMS organizations to enhance their response capabilities.

Legislation cosponsored by Arcuri to provide tax assistance for volunteer emergency responders to help area fire departments retain and recruit volunteers was included in the Heroes Earnings Assistance and Relief Tax Act (H.R. 3997) which passed the House this month.

In March, Arcuri joined 100 Members of Congress in writing to the House Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee requesting additional funding for the AFG Program as well as Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grants that provide assistance to local departments to increase the number of first responders.

In June, the House passed the fiscal year 2008 Homeland Security Appropriations bill, which included a substantial increase in funding for AFGP and SAFER. The bill includes \$800 million for AFGP in fiscal year 2008.

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