

Washington, DC -- U.S. Representative Michael A. Arcuri (D-Utica) today announced \$526,672 for four local fire departments to enhance preparedness as first responders through the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program (AFGP).

"I am pleased to announce these critical federal grants to provide local fire departments with the resources they need to upgrade equipment and purchase new technology," **said Arcuri, a member of the Congressional Fire Services Caucus.**

"These grants allow local first responders, many of them volunteers, to improve their already heroic efforts to protect our communities. In Congress, I have joined colleagues on both sides of the aisle to request increased funding for this critical grant program and will continue working in Washington to ensure that local first responders have the tools they need to keep us safe."

The grants include:

- \$ 185,250 for the Pinders Corners Fire Department for Vehicle Acquisition (Otsego County)
- \$135,850 for the Coventry Volunteer Fire Company Incorporated for Operations and Safety (Chenango County)
- \$57,000 for the City of Norwich Fire Department for Operations and Safety (Chenango County)
- \$148,572 for the Westmoreland Volunteer Fire Department for Operations and Safety (Oneida County)

The Coventry Volunteer Fire Company will use these funds to purchase 35 sets of turnout gear, 10 new airpacs, a thermal imaging camera, and six portable radios.

"We are a little fire department, our budget is from the town, so we would only be able to afford one or two new sets of turnout gear. With these funds we will be able to outfit everyone and at one time," **said First Assistant Chief, Daron Schultes.** "The thermal imaging camera will help us find the fire and tell us when it is fully out - saving manpower time and on scene time. This is something we've never have the money to do. We are very pleased as this is the first grant we've received."

The Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program (AFGP) awards grants to firefighters, emergency response personnel and first responders throughout the nation 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. The grant for Westmoreland Volunteer Fire Department is part of FY 2006 grant rounds – during which AFGP will award approximately \$485 million.

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 fire departments to increase the number of firefighters and first responders.

The House recently 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.

Earlier this year, Arcuri also cosponsored the Volunteer Responder Incentive Protection Act (H.R. 943) which would provide tax assistance for volunteer emergency responders to help area fire departments retain and recruit volunteers. The 24th Congressional District is home to a number of firehouses that rely exclusively on volunteer firefighters.

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