

WASHINGTON—Today, Congressman Mike Quigley (D-IL) voted to invest in the safety and security of Illinois' firefighters and ensure they have the critical resources to keep our communities safe. The Fire Grants Reauthorization Act of 2009, H.R. 3791, bolsters firefighter assistance programs that allow local fire departments to provide training, purchase equipment and vehicles, and hire personnel.

“At a time when state and local governments across the country are racked by budget crises, the federal government must make sure that firefighters never suffer the effects of underfunding,” said Quigley. “Emergency responders spend their lives running into burning buildings when everyone else is running out. It is our responsibility to equip these brave men and women with the resources to keep them safe and allow them to continue saving lives.”

The bi-partisan bill authorizes a total of \$2.2 billion a year in grants for local municipalities to support community firefighters. It also makes it easier for fire departments to access these critical funds by lowering matching requirements and modifying time commitments.

The state of Illinois has been the beneficiary of the available federal funding, receiving more than \$27 million in 2008. However, amidst local budget cuts to emergency services this summer, the Fireman's Fund Insurance Co. found that two-thirds of Illinois fire departments still had to delay purchasing or replacing old equipment, according to a *Chicago Tribune* report.

Further, the bill makes changes to the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) Program to assure that funding will be distributed evenly between urban and rural communities. Under the old law, less than 20 percent of total funding went to the country's most populated areas.

H.R. 3791 passed out of the House this afternoon by an overwhelming majority.