

WASHINGTON, DC –“ Congressman Joe Courtney today joined with firefighters, fire police and other first responders at the Gales Ferry Fire Department to announce new legislation that would extend public safety officer death benefits to fire police. Fire police officers provide unique and varying emergency response services in several states, including Connecticut. Because there is no uniform national designation for fire police, many of these public servants face additional hurdles in accessing benefits that other public safety officers receive.

“In towns across eastern Connecticut, fire police are first on the scene right along with police, fire fighters and EMTs,” said Congressman Courtney. “If, God forbid, they are injured or killed in service to their community, it is only right that they receive the same benefits as other public safety officers. This bill would cut through bureaucratic red tape, and ensure that fire police get the benefits they earn and deserve.”

Courtney’s legislation would ensure fair treatment of fire police within the Public Safety Officer’s Benefit (PSOB) program, clarifying their eligibility for benefits. PSOB provides a one-time benefit to eligible survivors of public safety officers whose deaths were the direct and proximate result of an injury sustained in the line of duty. It also provides a one-time benefit to eligible public safety officers who were permanently and totally disabled as a result of a catastrophic injury sustained in the line of duty.

“We’re trying to correct an inequity in the law that governs the Public Safety Officers Benefit Program,” said Gales Ferry Fire Chief Tony Saccone. “The program doesn’t recognize a fire policeman who daily puts his life on the line directing traffic away from emergencies. A fire policeman is a public safety officer by directing the public away from danger.”

The bill, which will be introduced this week, already has two co-sponsors: Reps. John Larson (CT) and Betty Sutton (OH).

***Photos from today’s press conference at the Gales Ferry Fire Department are available upon request.