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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SEN. JACQUE'S BILL SUPPORTING OUR VOLUNTEER FIRE FIGHTERS CLEARS COMMITTEE

Bill provides stipend to cover education and training expenses currently borne by volunteers

MADISON, WI... Legislation supporting our local volunteer fire fighters by providing a stipend to cover their education and training expenses unanimously passed an Assembly committee today.

State Sen. André Jacque (R-New Franken), co-author of the bill, said departments that provide these critical emergency services have been experiencing declining numbers of volunteers who do this life-saving work.

“Most of us don’t realize that the volunteers who dedicate their time to serve their neighbors are also expected to pay for their own education and training,” Sen. Jacque said. “It’s no wonder that some departments providing emergency services are struggling to attract and retain volunteers.”

Sen. Jacque said smaller, mostly rural localities rely on volunteer firefighter departments to safeguard the health and safety of their citizens. In fact, approximately 92 percent Wisconsin fire departments are volunteer or mostly volunteer.

“The reality is that fewer volunteers could mean greater response times,” Sen. Jacque said. “This legislation is a first step toward ensuring that Wisconsin citizens do not face greater risk in emergency situations based on where they live.”

Sen. Jacque said his bill attempts to lighten this load - and boost retention and recruitment - by providing a stipend to cover training costs for these selfless public servants. To qualify their volunteers for this financial incentive to serve, a municipality would pass an ordinance providing a 100 percent match to receive a grant from the Wisconsin Department of Administration to cover training costs up to \$250 per volunteer firefighter. Members would then receive a stipend of up to \$500, split between the state and the municipality.

“This initiative will help ramp up recruitment efforts to reduce the enhanced risk to public safety associated with a potentially delayed emergency response,” Sen. Jacque said. “It will also relieve the strain that inadequate staffing can place on our volunteer fire fighters, who have chosen a vocation that is already stressful,” Sen. Jacque said.

The bill ([Assembly Bill 187](#)) must now pass the full Assembly and Senate, and be signed by the Governor, to become law.

Senator André Jacque represents Northeast Wisconsin's First Senate District, consisting of Door and Kewaunee Counties and portions of Brown, Calumet, Manitowoc, and Outagamie counties.

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