



Durbin applauds bipartisan passage of amendment establishing firefighter cancer registry

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WASHINGTON, D.C. - Today, U.S. Democratic Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL) applauded passage of a bipartisan amendment that will help fund and establish the Firefighter Cancer Registry, which is a specialized national cancer registry to improve collection and research activities related to monitoring and studying cancer incidence among firefighters. The amendment passed last night by a vote of 85-0 for inclusion in the Labor Health and Human Services FY19 appropriation bill being considered by the Senate this week. Durbin cosponsored the bill that was signed into law this year creating the registry.

“This amendment provides needed funding to help improve our knowledge base about cancer incidence among our nation’s firefighters,” Durbin said. “Firefighters put themselves in harm’s way every day to protect communities, big and small, that they serve. They ask very little in return. The very least we can do is make sure that we are looking out for their health and well-being. I’m glad the Senate unanimously approved this funding for a registry firefighters asked us to help start.”

“As President of the Illinois Fire Chiefs Association, I am extremely pleased to see that the Firefighter Cancer Registry Act not only passed through Congress but will also be funded. The incidents of cancer diagnosis in firefighters are currently at an alarming rate and this program will allow for medical researchers to utilize information to assist in reducing the occurrence of cancer in the United States fire service. In Illinois, the health of our firefighters is a top priority and as leaders we will not rest until we find ways to ensure these dedicated first responders return home safe and healthy during and after their careers. I want to thank Senator Durbin for his attention to this critical issue and his willingness to continually assist us in his home State,” said Fire Chief John R. Christian, President of the Illinois Fire Chiefs Association.

Firefighters are at an increased risk of contracting several major cancers. However, due to the limited availability of data, there are significant gaps in information about cancer incidence in firefighters. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) will establish and manage the new registry.

Specifically, the registry will:

- Store and consolidate epidemiological information submitted by healthcare professionals related to cancer incidence among firefighters.
- Make de-identified data available to public health researchers to provide them with robust and comprehensive datasets to expand groundbreaking research.
- Improve our understanding of cancer incidence and could potentially lead to the development of more sophisticated safety protocols and safeguards as more data is collected.

The amendment was supported by the International Association of Fire Fighters, the National Volunteer Fire Council, the International Association of Fire Chiefs, the Congressional Fire Services Institute, the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation, and the International Fire Services Training Association.