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## **CARDIN, MIKULSKI ANNOUNCE YEAR'S FIRST STAFFING AWARD FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY FIREFIGHTERS**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Senators Benjamin L. Cardin and Barbara A. Mikulski (both D-Md.) today announced the Kensington Volunteer Fire Department has been awarded \$324,064 in federal funding through the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program (AFGP). The Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant they received was created to provide funding directly to fire departments and volunteer firefighter organizations to help them increase the number of trained, front-line firefighters available in their communities. Senator Cardin is a member of the Budget Committee, which each year sets priorities for funding to federal agencies, including the Department of Homeland Security.

"First responders have always been on the front lines, keeping our families and our neighborhoods safe from harm. I thank these brave men and women for their continuing service and sense of duty to our community," said Senator Cardin. "I am proud to support federal investment through local grants like this, which is essential to ensure our community heroes have the equipment and training they need to do their jobs safely and efficiently."

"I know how important this funding is to Maryland firefighters – often it's the difference between life and death. First responders protect our homes and communities, and the federal government has a responsibility to protect them by providing them with the tools they need to do their jobs safer and smarter," said Senator Mikulski. "Every day when our first responders report for duty, they don't know what they will face. That's why I fight every year for the equipment, training and staffing our protectors and communities deserve."

The Kensington Volunteer Fire Department will use its \$324,064 to recruit volunteer firefighters or Advanced Life Support (ALS) providers by assisting with the cost of obtaining an Associates Degree in either Fire Science or Emergency Medical Technology in exchange for service to the department. This is the sixth award for the department under the AFGP and the first SAFER award for Maryland this funding cycle. Previous awards include: \$600,000 to purchase a new ladder truck earlier this year, \$157,785 to purchase new firefighter turn out gear and mass casualty equipment in 2006, and \$105,883 to purchase new turn out gear for their EMS personnel in 2005. Since 2001, Montgomery County Fire & Emergency Medical Services (EMS) units have been awarded over \$6 million in federal assistance through the AFGP. For more information, call Chris St. John at 301-929-8000.

In his fiscal year 2009 budget proposal, President Bush cut funding for the AFGP program by 60 percent – a \$450 million cut – and completely eliminated funding for SAFER grants for the third year in a row. However, Senate Democrats were able to restore funding to fiscal year 2008 funding – \$560 million was restored in fire grant funding and SAFER grants were funded at \$190 million.

Since 2001, Maryland fire departments and fire service organizations have received more than \$59 million through the AFGP.

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