

News From
U.S. Senator Barbara A. Mikulski
Democrat from Maryland



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**MIKULSKI FIGHTS TO HELP VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS
STRUGGLING WITH FUEL COSTS**

“We need to put government back on the side of businesses, families and communities.”

WASHINGTON, D.C. – With skyrocketing fuel costs impacting industries across the country, **Senator Barbara A. Mikulski (D-Md.)** today joined her Senate colleagues led by **Senator Robert P. Casey (D-Pa.)** to help volunteer fire companies cope with the rising cost of diesel fuel and gasoline. The *Supporting America’s Volunteer Emergency Services (SAVES) Act of 2008*, which was introduced today, will establish a new grant program at the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to help volunteer fire companies struggling with fuel costs.

“Our dedicated volunteer firefighters are saving lives every day – they need relief while the nation struggles with rising fuel prices. I am so proud to team up with my colleagues to fight for the assistance we know volunteer firefighters need and deserve,” said Senator Mikulski. “We need to put government back on the side of businesses, families and communities. We need to make sure we keep America rolling and help roll back these prices.”

Under the *SAVES Act*, HUD is instructed to set a baseline for gas and diesel prices in each of the country’s five petroleum districts using 2007 price data. After participating volunteer fire companies submit their gas and diesel receipts, HUD will provide a grant for 75 percent of the difference between how much they paid for the fuel and how much the same amount would have cost at 2007 baseline prices. An average volunteer company that uses 1,000 gallons of gasoline and 700 gallons of diesel would receive about \$1,725 under this program.

Between June 2003 and June 2008, regular gasoline prices have risen 171 percent, and diesel prices have risen 229 percent. Fire companies have reported that high fuel costs have hampered their ability to respond to fire emergencies with the amount of trucks and equipment recommended under National Fire Protection Association guidelines.

According to a 2004 study from the National Volunteer Fire Council Foundation, volunteer firefighters help save localities across the country an estimated \$37.2 billion per year. Thirty-nine percent of our country’s population (approximately 117 million people) relies on all-volunteer or mostly-volunteer companies to respond to fire emergencies.

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