SENATE, No. 1566

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

222nd LEGISLATURE

PRE-FILED FOR INTRODUCTION IN THE 2026 SESSION

Sponsored by:
Senator CARMEN F. AMATO, JR.
District 9 (Ocean)
Senator ROBERT W. SINGER
District 30 (Monmouth and Ocean)

Co-Sponsored by:
Senators McKnight, Tiver, Singleton and Schepisi

SYNOPSIS

Establishes "Volunteer Fire Company Assistance Program" in DCA to support operations and sustainability of volunteer fire companies; appropriates $10 million.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

Introduced Pending Technical Review by Legislative Counsel.

(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 10/1/2026)

AN ACT concerning the operation and sustainability of volunteer fire companies, supplementing P.L.1983, c.382 (C.52:27D-25a et seq.), and making an appropriation.

BE IT ENACTED *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:*

1. P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill) shall be known and may be cited as the "Volunteer Fire Company Assistance Program Act."

2. As used in P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill):

"Emergency equipment" means any item used for the purpose of providing fire and life safety, including but not limited to, boots, helmets, self-contained breathing apparatuses, fire hoses, extrication tools, insurance, maintenance of and repairs to fire apparatus and vehicles, utility costs for buildings, training, the cost of hazardous materials units, and any other personal protective equipment as determined by the director of the division. "Emergency equipment" shall not include the purchase of any vehicle or building.

"Fund" means the Volunteer Fire Company Assistance Program Fund established pursuant to subsection a. of section 3 of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill).

"Grant program" means the grant program developed and administered by the director pursuant to subsection a. of section 3 of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill).

3. a. There is established in the division a special non-lapsing fund to be known as the "Volunteer Fire Company Assistance Program Fund," which shall be annually credited with money appropriated by the Legislature. The director of the division shall develop and administer a grant program to annually distribute moneys in the fund to volunteer fire companies in the form of grants to support the ongoing operations and sustainability of volunteer fire companies, including the purchasing of emergency equipment.

b. To participate in the grant program, a volunteer fire company shall submit an application to the division in a manner and on such forms as determined by the director of the division. An application shall include information detailing the volunteer fire company's proposed uses for the grant funding, including, but not limited to:

(1) the amount of the grant award being sought;

(2) a specific description of any emergency equipment to be purchased; and

(3) a description of how the grant award will be used to maximize the ongoing operations and sustainability of the volunteer fire department, including ensuring compliance with any applicable State and federal laws and regulations.

c. The division shall review the applications submitted pursuant to subsection b. of this section and shall award grant funding to the applicants. The division shall establish an annual maximum grant award amount to ensure that the maximum number of program applicants receive a grant award, given available funding.

d. In the event that a volunteer fire company receives a grant award, the division shall notify the municipal governing body in which the volunteer fire company is located of the award, including information of the amount of the grant award and the volunteer fire company's proposed uses for the grant award.

4. a. Within one year of receiving a grant award pursuant to section 3 of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill), each participating volunteer fire company shall submit a report to the division in a manner and on such forms as determined by the director of the division, detailing:

(1) expenditure of grant funds under the grant program;

(2) specific emergency equipment and other items purchased with the grant award intended for providing fire and life safety services; and

(3) the impact, if determinable, that the grant award has had on maximizing the ongoing operations and sustainability of volunteer fire department.

b. The division shall compile the reports submitted pursuant to subsection a. of this section for inclusion in a comparative profile of the participating volunteer fire companies and shall post the profile for public inspection on the division's Internet website in an easily accessible location.

c. Within one year of posting the comparative profile required pursuant to subsection b. of this section, the director of the division shall submit a report to the Governor, and the Legislature pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1). The report shall contain information on the implementation of the grant program, including: the total number of volunteer fire companies which applied for grant funding pursuant to section 3 of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill); the average amount of grant awards which were disbursed to volunteer fire companies; a summary of the types of emergency equipment which were most frequently sought with grant awards; and any recommendations that the director of the division deems appropriate and necessary concerning the disbursement of funding for volunteer fire departments.

5. There is appropriated from the General Fund to the "Volunteer Fire Company Assistance Program Fund," established pursuant to section 3 of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill), the sum of $10,000,000 for the purpose of supporting the ongoing operations and sustainability of volunteer fire departments.

6. This act shall take effect 90 days following the date of enactment, but the Director of the Division of Fire Safety, in consultation with the Commissioner of Community Affairs, may take any anticipatory action in advance of that date as may be necessary to implement the provisions of this act.

STATEMENT

This bill establishes the "Volunteer Fire Company Assistance Program" in the Division of Fire Safety in the Department of Community Affairs to support the ongoing operations and sustainability of volunteer fire companies. The bill establishes a special, non-lapsing fund to be known as the "Volunteer Fire Company Assistance Program Fund" (fund), which is required to be annually credited with money appropriated by the Legislature. Under the bill, the Director of the Division of Fire Safety (division) is required to develop and administer a grant program to annually distribute monies in the fund to volunteer fire companies in the form of grants to support the ongoing operations and sustainability of volunteer fire companies, including the purchasing of emergency equipment.

Under the bill, to participate in the grant program, a volunteer fire company is to be required to submit an application to the division. An application is required to include certain information detailing the volunteer fire company's proposed plans for the grant funding.

The Director of the division (director) is required to establish an annual maximum grant award amount to ensure that the maximum number of program applicants receive a grant award, given available funding.

Under the bill, within one year of receiving a grant, each participating volunteer fire company is required to submit a report to the division detailing the use and impact of the funds.

The bill requires the director to compile the reports for inclusion in a comparative profile of the participating volunteer fire companies and post the profile for public inspection on the division's Internet website. The bill also provides that, within one year of posting the comparative profile, the director is to submit a report to the Governor and the Legislature that contains information on the implementation of the grant program.

The bill appropriates $10 million, as specified in the bill, from the General Fund for the purpose of supporting the ongoing operations and sustainability of volunteer fire departments.