



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 826

Resolution calling on the Mayor of New York City to permanently staff all Fire Department of New York (FDNY) engine companies with five firefighters and an officer at the outset of each tour.

By Council Members Brannan, Borelli, Holden and Kallos

Whereas, The Uniformed Firefighters Association of Greater New York (UFA) represents over 8,000 FDNY firefighters and personnel; and

Whereas, In labor negotiations between the UFA and the City of New York, whether a FDNY engine company should be staffed with five firefighters and an officer (known as having a “fifth firefighter”) or four firefighters and an officer at the outset of each tour has remained a key bargaining point; and

Whereas, Prior to 1988, FDNY engine companies were staffed with five firefighters, and one officer, which was a higher-ranking FDNY member, such as a Lieutenant, that would supervise over the company; and

Whereas, However, beginning in 1988, the FDNY began to reduce engine company staffing from five firefighters and an officer to four firefighters and an officer, so that, in 2011, no engine company in the city operated with a fifth firefighter; and

Whereas, Notably, the most recently available, although expired, collective bargaining agreement between the UFA and the City looked to change this staffing reduction, allowing the FDNY to designate five engine companies with a fifth firefighter at the outset of each tour, effective February 1, 2016, with an additional five engine companies to be staffed with a fifth firefighter effective February 1, 2017; February 1, 2018; and February 1, 2019; and

Whereas, As per this agreement, a total of 20 engine companies throughout the City are staffed with a fifth firefighter, however, this agreement stipulates that the FDNY, on the first day of each month, can review

these engine companies' firefighter availability for the preceding 365 days and in the event that firefighter average medical leave, including both line-of-duty and non-line-of-duty, exceeds the "designated absence rate" of 7.50%, the FDNY will discontinue that engine company's staffing of a fifth firefighter for the remainder of that month; and

Whereas, The FDNY defines the role of the fifth firefighter as the "Door" position, meaning that they facilitate the advancement of the hose-line into the fire area and prevent it from getting stuck if turns need to be made; and

Whereas, The UFA, in their support for a fifth firefighter on engine companies, has pointed to a FDNY study done in 1987, where a former division commander for midtown Manhattan concluded that an engine company with only four firefighters is ineffective in service delivery and has a 75 percent increase in hose-stretch time; and

Whereas, Although dated, the UFA still looks to these findings as reliable and, potentially, more true now, as the weight that firefighters now carry has drastically increased since 1987; and

Whereas, Additionally, a National Institute of Standards and Technology 2013 study analyzed 14 high-risk tasks undertaken by firefighters, finding that three-member firefighter crews took almost 21 minutes longer than five-member crews to complete all tasks, while four-member crews took nine minutes longer than five-member crews to complete those same tasks; and

Whereas, Furthermore, the Daily News reported that the FDNY's own studies show that engine companies equipped with a fifth firefighter can get water on a fire twice as quickly; and

Whereas, Having a fifth firefighter staffed on an engine company drastically improves the effectiveness of that engine company, thus the permanent staffing of a fifth firefighter on all engine companies throughout the City would decrease the time it takes to put out fires, decrease deaths and injuries due to fires, and reduce overall costs of medical leave and fire damage; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls on the Mayor of New York City to

permanently staff all Fire Department of New York (FDNY) engine companies with five firefighters and an officer at the outset of each tour.

KK
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