



The Concept of County Fire Departments

FASNY has been approached by Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Services Commissioner Jackie Bray on two issues that would impact the volunteer fire service. These two issues are (1) the ability to form county-wide fire departments and (2) to allow authorities having jurisdiction (AHJ's) to pay volunteer firefighters for their service. During a meeting with Commissioner Bray in November 2025, she asked FASNY to come up with recommendations for providing "nominal compensation" to volunteer firefighters.

Further, at a December 2025 meeting of the four state associations, FASNY suggested that a task force be established to discuss and flesh out these concepts. The task force was formed, has met several times and continues to work on these concepts.

With respect to the establishment of county fire departments, we have informed Commissioner Bray that we cannot take a position on this vague concept until we see a specific, detailed proposal. To simply empower counties to establish their own fire departments without providing any uniform statewide parameters could cause chaos and actually diminish public safety. Issues such as funding, jurisdiction, staffing, resource allocation and many others need to be clearly defined before we are able to develop a position. If not done properly, establishing another layer of emergency response could also add to New York's affordability crisis by placing additional taxes on residents to fund a countywide fire department.

To date, we have not received a detailed proposal. We look forward to working with the other state fire associations on this concept once we have something to analyze and respond to.

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