

NYS Association of Fire Chiefs 2026 End of Session Update

During the 2025–2026 legislative session, lawmakers introduced 22,271 bills, showing how active and crowded the session was. Although the formal legislative session ended in early June for both chambers, bill introductions continued afterward at a slower pace, which is typical as lawmakers and staff finish final actions and administrative processing.

Despite that volume, only 165 bills had been signed into law and 759 had passed both houses as of the reporting date. That is the lowest number of bills passed in both houses since 2021, suggesting a session with heavy legislative activity but relatively limited final enactment.

The gap between the number of bills introduced and the number ultimately enacted shows how much of the legislative process never makes it past the proposal stage. In New York, many bills are introduced for signaling, negotiation, or future sessions, but only a small share become law each year.

The low passage total also points to a more constrained or cautious legislative environment than in recent years. Factors like budget negotiations, election-year politics, and limited floor time can all slow down final movement on bills, even when introduction numbers remain very high.

The 2026 legislative session featured significant activity affecting New York's volunteer fire service, EMS providers, fire districts, and code enforcement officials. We focused our advocacy on improving volunteer recruitment and retention, expanding firefighter benefits, strengthening EMS systems, enhancing fire prevention and code enforcement, and preserving local control. Several priority measures advanced, while many additional recruitment and benefit proposals remain active for future sessions.

IUC Bills

S5432/A6410 by Skoufis / McMahon - Disability Benefits Under VFBL
Final Status: Senate Finance Committee / Assembly Local Government Committee

Increases permanent and temporary disability benefits under the Volunteer Firefighters' Benefit Law. Provides an increase in permanent disability benefits from \$600 per week to \$1200 and an increase in temporary total disability benefits from \$400 per week to \$800.

Designate EMS as an Essential Service – Chapter 703 of the Laws of 2025 and Chapter 93 of 2026

S.8806 / A.9440 by Mayer / Otis

Governor Hochul signed Chapter 703 of 2025 into law with a caveat that “to ensure that such plans are successful, it is important that the Department of Health is authorized to develop guidance for the counties in the development of their plans and have a meaningful chance to review and provide feedback on such plans. Because the plans will require coordination among municipalities, it is important to designate qualified personnel as the convenor of the plan development process.” The 2026 bill that was signed into law addressed her concerns by giving counties an additional six months (until December 19, 2026) to develop and maintain comprehensive county emergency medical system plans.

S5407-A/A7285-A by Harckham / Burdick – First Responder Peer Support Program Final Status: Passed the Senate / Assembly Ways and Means Committee

Creates a statewide peer support program modeled after the Joseph P. Dwyer Veterans Peer-to-Peer Program to improve firefighters' and EMS providers' mental health resources. It provides confidential mental health counseling, training for peer mentors, and protection for support communications under law. The goal is to address stress, trauma, and burnout, improving overall mental health and job performance.

**S6233-A/A6790-A by Martinez/McMahon - Income Tax Credit
Final Status: Passed Both Houses**

This bill increases the volunteer firefighters' and ambulance workers' personal income tax credit from \$200 to \$800 for eligible individuals and from \$400 to \$1600 for eligible married joint filers.

**S10597 / A10630-A by Martinez / Solages – Nominal Compensation
Final Status: Senate Local Government / Assembly Local Government**

Authorizes volunteer stipends and pay-per-call compensation while maintaining volunteer status. Provides nominal pay-per-call and paid-on-call stipends to volunteer firefighters, while preserving their volunteer status, and to create a state assistance fund to help eligible fire entities support such programs.

**A.10059 by Solages - Amendment to the Ambulance Billing Law – Originally Enacted in Chapter 55 of the Laws of 2022 and Extended by Chapter 57 of the Laws of 2025
Final Status: Assembly Local Government**

This amendment authorizes billing for mutual aid responses, allowing EMS providers to recover costs and eliminating prior restrictions on mutual aid billing. The law is scheduled to expire on April 9, 2031. This bill would remove the sunset clause and make the law permanent.

S7021 by Ryan [Was companion to A8082-A by Eachus; Senate bill not amended to match the Assembly bill. Assembly bill died in Assembly Governmental Employees Committee]

Final Status: Senate Civil Service

This bill would allow a member, upon application to a public retirement system, to achieve one year of service credit for every five years of volunteer fire or emergency service in the State, not to exceed three years of total service credit; available to such member anytime before retirement.

NYS Budget

Although several proposals that were heavily lobbied for the fire service did not make it into the final budget language, the final enacted budget can be viewed as a positive year, particularly because of:

- The allocation of \$25 million to the V-FIRE grant program for volunteer fire departments. The program supports construction, renovation, and purchase of fire stations, substations, shared stations, training towers, classrooms, meeting spaces, exhaust systems, shower facilities, PPE, decontamination equipment, radios, rehab equipment, and SCBA fill/testing equipment.
- DHSES is funded at \$9.25 billion overall, reinforcing the state's emphasis on emergency readiness and response systems.
- Benefits to EMS and ambulance services through infrastructure, communications, and emergency-management funding.
- Tier 6 retirement improvements benefiting career firefighters including increasing the cap on overtime that may be included in the Final Average Salary calculation from 15% to 25% for police and fire members.

Medicare Crossover Payments (Part M)

The Executive Budget included a proposal (Part M) to eliminate Medicaid crossover payments for Medicare Part B ambulance services provided to dual-eligible beneficiaries. Fire service and EMS organizations strongly opposed the proposal, arguing that it would have significantly reduced reimbursement for ambulance services and further strained an EMS system already facing workforce shortages and financial challenges. The proposal was **not included in the enacted State Budget**, preserving existing crossover reimbursement for ambulance providers.

Bills Passed Both Houses

Firefighter Benefits

S7316/A8008 by Hinchey / Lunsford – Service Award Forfeiture

Requires forfeiture of LOSAP/service award benefits for volunteers convicted of felonies against their fire department, district, or company.

S9502-A/A10885-B by Martinez/Stern – Property Tax Exemption

Extends the optional real property tax exemption to surviving spouses of professional firefighters killed in the line of duty, subject to local adoption.

Building & Fire Code

S6368-B/A3126-B by Skoufis / Lunsford - Building or Fire Code Violations

Requires local code enforcement officials to provide complainants with copies of compliance orders issued after building or fire code violations.

EMS

S4675/A688 by Jackson / Buttenschon - Provides minimum basic training related to handling emergency situations involving individuals with any physical and/or developmental disability to all firefighters

Other

S5614/A3681-A by Addabbo / Woerner

Removes restrictions on the frequency certain authorized organizations may conduct bingo games

Bills Passed One House

Volunteer Recruitment & Retention

S6019/A288 by Baskin / Barrett - Firefighter and Ambulance Workers' Credit

Allows volunteers to receive both the state income tax credit and a locally authorized property tax exemption. Passed the Senate.

S3111/A9657 by Helming / Cashman - High School Recruitment

Allows volunteer fire departments to recruit students directly in high schools. Passed the Senate.

S6009-B/A1633-A by Baskin / McMahon - Youth Programs Sponsored by Fire Departments

Expands youth firefighter programs while establishing liability protections and operational safeguards. Passed the Senate.

EMS

S9664/A10990 by Hinchey/Santabarbara - Task Force Study

Establishes a Rural Ambulance Services Task Force to study rural EMS availability and recommend improvements. Passed the Senate.

Firefighter Health & Wellness

S190/A4675 by Martinez / Eachus - Payment of Death Benefits

Requires volunteer firefighter and ambulance worker death benefits to be paid within 90 days. Passed the Senate.

S257/A5100 by Martinez / O'Pharrow - Study on Lithium Ion Battery Fires

Directs the Office of Fire Prevention and Control to study lithium-ion battery fires and prevention strategies. Passed the Senate.

Building Code & Fire Prevention

S4534/A5289 by Skoufis / McDonald - Building Code Administration

Expands Department of State oversight and enforcement authority over local building code administration. Passed the Senate.

Priority Bills That Remain Pending

Volunteer Incentives

A28 by Burdick – This legislation would give volunteer firefighters, volunteer ambulance workers, volunteer reserve force officers, auxiliary police officers and volunteer emergency medical service personnel a tax credit on their NYS income taxes. This program will provide a progressive program of credits for volunteers who attend at least forty percent of the activities and are in good standing with at least one year of service. The credit begins at \$250 after the first year of service and goes to \$2,500 for ten or more years of consecutive service.

S3527/A4720 by Ortt / Bologna – Mileage reimbursement tax credit for volunteers using personal vehicles during emergency response.

Firefighter Health & Safety

S906/A4477 by Harckham / Levenberg – Makes permanent provisions creating a presumption relating to certain lung disabilities incurred by volunteer firefighters.

S1606/A7432 by Borrello / Hawley – Provides that each fire district, department or company required to provide enhanced cancer disability benefits for volunteer fire fighters shall be entitled to reimbursement by the state.

S6749/A1458 by Webb / Hunter – Provides for insurance coverage of comprehensive annual medical examinations for firefighters.

Building & Fire Prevention

S3212/A7059 by Kavanagh / McDonald – Provides for state assistance to local governments for the enforcement of fire prevention and building codes.

S3411/A4020 by Comrie / Burger – Provides a tax credit for the installation of certain fire sprinkler systems

S6906/A8586 by Harckham / Carroll – Relates to minimum staffing levels for agencies enforcing the minimum standards under the New York State Uniform Fire Prevention and Building Code Act.

Lithium-Ion Battery Safety

S7197-B/A6955-C by Addabbo / Williams – This legislation aims to ensure that battery energy storage systems are sited with appropriate distance from neighboring properties, are backed by sufficient financial assurances, and are developed with meaningful community input to protect public safety and local interests.

A6255 by Palmesano – Establishes the Commission on Battery Fire Safety Practices, which shall be tasked with researching and making recommendations on the need for resources for police, volunteer fire departments and emergency medical services concerning health and safety best practices when responding to lithium-ion battery incidents in New York State.

A252 by Eachus – Requires the use of a fire-resistant blanket, bag or container when charging a bicycle with electric assist or an electric scooter.

S1486/A6414 by O'Mara / Palmesano – Omnibus Emergency Services Volunteer Incentive Act

Comprehensive incentive package including expanded tax deductions, vehicle registration fee exemptions, health insurance options, and additional volunteer benefits.

Other Bills of Interest

S10096/A11309 by Hinchey / Burroughs - Establishes the volunteer fire infrastructure and response equipment (V-FIRE) grant program.

S3053-A/A4821-A by Harckham / Kay - Directs the New York state bridge authority to provide a report outlining their efforts and progress on decreasing and deterring suicide attempts on authority bridges

S9980/A10763 by Skoufis / Kay - Requires utility companies to physically respond to and promptly secure downed wires within two hours of notification from a municipal emergency responder.

S10361/A11219 by Martinez / Stern - Increases the earnings limitation for retired emergency medical technicians employed by certain agencies providing emergency services from \$35,000 to \$50,000.

S9229/A6074 by Scarcella-Spanton / Kay - Adds felony arson in the third and the fourth degree to the list of bail eligible offenses.

S518-C/A5501-A by Persaud / Buttenschon - Requires the inclusion of cultural competency training in the basic training and pre-employment course curricula for police, firefighters, correction officers and first responders

S7367-A/A4679-A by Stavisky / Eachus - Grants volunteer firefighters and emergency medical technicians academic credit at SUNY and CUNY

S9666/A5673 by Hinchey / Levenberg - Waives the registration fee and service charge for distinctive plates for certain volunteer firefighters and certain members of volunteer ambulance services

S4049/A1066 by Skoufis / Buttenschon - Authorizes full cancer screening upon entry of service to a fire department or fire company, and annually thereafter, to be paid by the State.

S6716/A3786 by Jackson / Weprin - Apportions funds raised from taxes on mutual fire insurance companies for maintaining and supporting the well-being of paid professional firefighters in New York. Requires one percent of "remaining monies" of a 2% tax on fire insurance premiums be paid to the treasurer of the New York State Professional Firefighters Association in order to promote, support, and maintain the well-being of New York paid professional firefighters.

The session represented meaningful progress for the volunteer fire service, highlighted by passage of the enhanced volunteer income tax credit and advancement of several firefighter health, EMS, and code enforcement initiatives. While many long-term recruitment and benefit proposals remain pending, they provide a strong foundation for our advocacy agenda heading into the next legislative session.

It should be noted that 2026 is an election year. Thirty current members of the New York State Legislature have announced that they are retiring or will not be seeking reelection. As a result, the 2027 legislative session is expected to begin with one of the largest incoming classes of freshman legislators in many years. This transition will also bring changes in legislative leadership, committee chairmanships, and committee memberships, creating a significantly different legislative landscape and requiring renewed outreach and education to build relationships with both new and returning policymakers.

This significant legislative turnover presents both a challenge and an opportunity for NYSAFC. Many incoming legislators will have little or no firsthand knowledge of New York's fire service, including the complexities of emergency response, the leadership responsibilities of fire chiefs, the increasing demands placed on fire departments, and the challenges associated with recruiting and retaining volunteer firefighters, funding essential equipment and training, and responding to an ever-expanding range of emergencies.

For NYSAFC, this means that legislative education and relationship-building must be a central component of its advocacy strategy. Establishing relationships with newly elected legislators and their staff early in their terms will be essential to ensuring they understand the critical role that fire chiefs and fire departments play in protecting New York's communities. Educating policymakers on the operational, fiscal, and public safety implications of proposed legislation will help ensure that legislative decisions are informed by the practical realities faced by fire departments across the state.

NYSAFC should expand its efforts to engage newly elected officials through district meetings, fire station visits, participation in local fire service events, and Lobby Day in Albany. These opportunities allow legislators to see firsthand the responsibilities of today's fire service leaders and the importance of maintaining a strong partnership between the Legislature and New York's fire service.

With one of the largest legislative turnovers in recent years, 2027 will provide a unique opportunity for NYSAFC to establish itself as a trusted resource on fire service issues. Proactive grassroots outreach and ongoing education will not only strengthen relationships with new lawmakers but also lay the foundation for advancing the Association's legislative priorities and ensuring that the voices of New York's fire chiefs are heard throughout the legislative process.

The Vandervort Group looks forward to continuing its partnership with the New York State Association of Fire Chiefs, providing strategic advocacy, legislative expertise, and government relations support to advance the Association's priorities in 2027 and the years ahead.