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Western Queens Firefighters, Political & Community Leaders Rally To Save Firehouses

UFA leaders and dozens of New York City Firefighters were joined outside of the quarters of Ladder 116 in Long Island City by City Comptroller John Liu (D), State Senator Jose Peralta (D-Queens), Assembly Members Cathy Nolan, Michael Gianaris, City Council Criminal Justice Committee Chair Elizabeth Crowley (D-Queens) and Councilmember Jimmy Van Bramer (D-Queens) to speak out against budget cut proposals made by Mayor Bloomberg.

“Our message to City Hall is that closing firehouses will not be tolerated by the taxpayers. Its pretty simple math: if you close firehouses it will take significantly longer to get New Yorkers help in a fire, medical emergency or God forbid another terrorist attack,” said **Steve Cassidy, UFA president**. “This week New York City firefighters helped halt a terrorist car bombing in Times Square proving our city is still the #1 terrorist target. This is a call to arms for local elected officials, community boards and all New Yorkers. If you don’t stand up now to fight for the public safety needs of your communities, the toll inflicted will be massive.”

The Mayor has threatened to close at least 20 fire companies and as many as 60 fire companies effective the new fiscal year, which begins July 1, 2010. **Cassidy continued**, "Our firefighters have responded to more emergencies in the last five years than at any other time in the 145 year history of the FDNY. Closing firehouses in this or any part of the city, especially at the levels proposed by the mayor would make it virtually impossible to protect New Yorkers."

“New Yorkers hate budget cuts, but what they hate more are budget cuts while there is waste in government,” said **City Comptroller John C. Liu**. “My office will continue to identify areas where our City can save money or is even owed funds, funds that could be put to better use elsewhere, like firehouses and other public safety services. Especially at a time when our City remains the number one terror target in the world, further efforts should be made to minimize the dismantling of fire companies.”

“New Yorkers deserve to know that this budget will keep them safe – and that includes keeping our fire companies open,” said **Council Member Elizabeth Crowley, Chair of the Fire & Criminal Justice Committee**. “Whether it’s rapidly responding to fires and medical emergencies, building collapses and most importantly, in this context, terrorist attacks, our fire companies are always among the first to respond and should not be cut. It is common sense: the greater our emergency response network we have on call, the more effectively we can protect ourselves from tragedy. Hundreds of people in every borough through New York City have rallied and will continue to send the clear message to the Mayor: keep our fire companies open.”

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"Our firehouses are the first line of defense in our communities. An economic downturn is no excuse to cut these vital resources from our neighborhoods," said **Council Member Van Bramer**. "Enough is enough. The City has already closed our Engine Company, Hook and Ladder 116 must remain open in order to continue protecting all of our residents."

Senator Jose Peralta said, "I understand that we must be fiscally prudent during these challenging economic times; however compromising public safety is not an option. Closing firehouses or cutting manning on for trucks is a recipe for disaster and we cannot allow Mayor Bloomberg to treat public safety like a line item in the budget. Our lives and our businesses depend upon a fully funded, fully staffed fire department."

"During these economic hard times, it is important that we do our best to maintain important vital services such as keeping the fire houses that we have in Queens open," said **Assemblywoman Catherine Nolan**. "Fire safety is a top concern for residents in Queens, closing fire houses will put residents and the city at risk if an emergency was to take place."

"New Yorkers' lives depend on the brave men and women of the FDNY. We must give them all the resources they need to do the best possible job in protecting us," said **Assembly Member Michael Gianaris**.

According to the FDNY's own manpower studies, just a 20 percent reduction in Engine Company staffing from five firefighters to four firefighters doubles the time it takes to begin getting water on a fire due to the time it takes to get a hose line in place to begin fighting a fire.

"The bottom line is that closing fire companies or reducing manpower threatens the safety of civilians and firefighters alike. The response to the weekend's terrorist attack in Times Square is a reminder of how critically important it is to get firefighters to the scene of an emergency quickly," added **Mr. Cassidy**. "Saturday's terrorist attack was the 11th plot or attempt to attack our city since 9/11, clearly showing that New York City is the #1 terrorist target. Closing firehouses or reducing staffing levels is dangerous for the city."

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