



# Professional Firefighters Association of New Jersey

International Association of Fire Fighters AFL-CIO-CLC



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On behalf of the entire PFANJ executive board, its members and their families, I want to thank Assemblywomen Quijano and Senator Greenstein for sponsoring and working to get the "Thomas P. Canzanella 21<sup>st</sup> Century First Responders Protection Act" passed and I want to thank Governor Murphy who is here today to sign it into law.

The road to get to this day has not been an easy one and there was one major obstacle in its way for 8 years and that was the previous governor, Chis Christie, who vetoed it twice when it was put on his desk. His absolute veto killed the bill and left no room for negotiations. He didn't even bother to talk to anyone about it.

The "Thomas P. Canzanella 21<sup>st</sup> Century First Responders Protection Act" as it is today is a collaborate effort of the Unions, Legislators and Governors efforts to do what more than 44 other states in the United States have already accomplished, to write a law that would benefit Firefighters and all first responders in New Jersey. The bill was not originally named after Thomas Canzanella. For those who may not know, this legislation was championed by then-PFANJ President Thomas Canzanella in 2002 after working on "the pile" after 9/11. Tom was a Chief's officer with the Hackensack Fire Department and was a member of NJ Task Force 1. The Task Force was mobilized and sent to NYC to assist with the rescue and recovery operation. Because of the magnitude of the devastation and loss of life, Tom as well as the rest of the United States knew at that moment the "job" of the first responder in the United States had changed forever. With the help of then NJFOP President Ed Brannigan, the bill was finally introduced in 2006 after Tom and Ed spent 4 years lobbying legislators and gathering information from other states in an effort to draft an all-encompassing bill.

Unfortunately, Tom Canzanella passed away in June of 2007, after which the bill was renamed for him to honor his dedication, knowledge and his relentless and tireless efforts not just on this legislation but because of his unwavering support for Fire Fighters and their families and all first responders in New Jersey.

This new law will not only benefit Firefighters, but will benefit public safety workers throughout New Jersey. "Public safety worker" includes a member, employee, or officer of a paid, partially-paid, or volunteer fire or police department, force, company or district, including the State Police, a Community Emergency Response Team approved by the New Jersey Office of Emergency Management, or a correctional facility, or a basic or advanced medical technician of a first aid or rescue squad, or any other nurse, basic or advanced medical technician responding to a catastrophic incident and directly involved and in contact with the public during such an incident, either as a volunteer, member of a Community Emergency Response Team or employed or directed by a health care facility.

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**IAFF State Association Chartered 1929**

The “Thomas P. Canzanella 21<sup>st</sup> Century First Responders Protection Act” will modernize the workers’ compensation system in the State of New Jersey to ensure the meeting of the critical needs of public safety workers who are New Jersey’s first line of defense in the event of catastrophic emergencies, epidemics and terrorist attacks, and assures that those workers are not denied a level of support which is commensurate to the sacrifices they and their families make for the safety and wellbeing of the citizens of this State and the Nation.

A few excerpts from the new law:

**All firefighters with 7 or more years:**

Any injury, illness or death of a firefighter which may be caused by cancer, including leukemia, shall be presumed to be an occupational disease compensable under the provisions of R.S. 34:15-1 et seq., regardless of whether the firefighter is in active service or is no longer in active service of a paid, part-paid, or volunteer fire department at the time of the injury, illness or death, provided that the firefighter is not more than 75 years of age or has not been out of active service for more than 20 years. This prima facie presumption may be rebutted by a preponderance of the evidence that the occupational disease did not arise out of and in the course of the employment.

**All fire fighters with less than 7 years and all other public safety workers as defined above:**

Any injury, illness or death of a public safety worker which may be caused by exposure to a known carcinogen, cancer-causing radiation or a radioactive substance, including cancer and damage to reproductive organs, shall be presumed to be compensable under the provisions of R.S.34:15-1 et seq., if the worker demonstrates that he was exposed, due to fire, explosion, spill or other means, to a known carcinogen, cancer-causing radiation or radioactive substances in the course of the worker's employment as a public safety worker and demonstrates that the injury, illness or death has manifested during his or her employment as a public safety worker. This prima facie presumption may be rebutted by a preponderance of the evidence that the exposure is not linked to the injury, illness or death.

**The law affirms:**

Certain rights of public safety workers and other employees under the circumstances specified in this act with respect to compensation provided pursuant to R.S.34:15-1 et seq. and shall not be construed as reducing, limiting or curtailing any rights of any other worker or employee to compensation pursuant to R.S.34:15-1 et seq. or of any worker with respect to any claim for compensation pursuant to R.S.34:15-1 et seq., including a claim initiated prior to the effective date of this act.

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