



Sanders Announces Funding for New Firefighter Training Facility

RANDOLPH CENTER, January 15 – Senator Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) announced today that he secured \$406,000 for a “live-burn” training facility for firefighters at Vermont Technical College.

“Firefighting is not an easy job and all of us want to see firefighters get the best possible training they can,” Sanders said. “Today, I am pleased to announce a significant addition to our efforts to improve training for the Vermont fire fighting community. At my request, a \$406,000 grant for a new test burn training facility was included in an appropriations bill passed by Congress just before the holidays. While this appropriation will not cover all the expenses for the building, it will go a very long way to seeing its completion.”

Vermont Tech President, Ty Handy joined the senator at the campus press conference. “We’re very excited about the opportunities and synergies this will create between Vermont Technical College’s new associate’s degree program in Fire Science and the excellent training programs offered by the Vermont Fire Academy,” Handy said. “To be able to offer this kind of training in the geographical center of Vermont will be a real plus for everyone involved in the Vermont fire fighting community.”

Sanders also said the facility “will be a great resource for firefighters throughout the state,” but he added “much more needs to be done to keep our fire fighting capabilities in Vermont strong and viable.

“In those cities and towns that have professional fire departments, we need to make sure that these communities have the kind of budgets they need to support their departments. In those towns that support the 94 percent of Vermont firefighters who are volunteers, we need to help them address the very serious problems of retention and recruitment. The simple truth is that in today’s world, volunteer departments all over Vermont and America are finding it increasingly difficult to maintain the kind of volunteer membership they need.

“My office is now working with the state’s fire fighting community to develop federal legislation that would help local departments across the country recruit and retain the fire fighting personnel they need.”

Sanders also used the occasion to thank the Vermont firefighting community -- which includes 300 professional fire fighters and 5,600 volunteers -- for all that they do for the people of our state. “These brave men and women put their lives on the line every day. They save lives and property; they protect us 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and 365 days a year; and we’re grateful for all that they do.”