

*Office of the Governor*  
**NEWS RELEASE**

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**DiFRANCESCO SIGNS LEGISLATION EXPANDING FIREMENS' BENEFITS**

Acting Governor Donald T. DiFrancesco signed two pieces of legislation today that expand benefits for firemen and their families.

"Today, with these two bills, we are going to take another step in providing for the welfare of our firefighters," the acting Governor said at the bill signing at the Professional Firefighters Association of New Jersey's (PFANJ) Annual Convention and Educational Seminar in Atlantic City.

"One of the bills, S-90, permits firefighters' associations and volunteer fire companies to conduct auxiliary income producing activities and still maintain their property tax exempt status. The second bill, A-2273, ensures that all loved ones of our deceased firefighters will receive the benefit payments they are entitled."

**S-90**, sponsored by Senators Raymond Zane (R-Salem/ Cumberland/ Gloucester) and John Adler (D-Camden) and Assemblymen George Geist (R-Camden/Gloucester) and John Kelly (R-Bergen/ Essex/Passaic) takes effect immediately and is retroactive to January 1, 1998.

**A-2273**, also known as the "Widow's Bill" was sponsored by Senators Joseph Vitale (D-Middlesex) and Louis Bassano (D-Essex/Union) and Assemblymen John Kelly (R-Bergen/Essex/ Passaic) and Kevin O'Toole (R-Essex/Union) enhances current benefits for a widow or widower, child or dependent parent, of a member of the Police and Firemen's Retirement System (PFRS) who died in active duty.

"We in New Jersey owe firefighters more than thanks. As Senate President and acting Governor I have worked to ensure that firefighters receive all the support they need to do their job," said DiFrancesco.

As Senate President, DiFrancesco supported an increase in staff in the Division of Fire Safety, an allocation of \$7.5 million for the thermal imaging camera grant program within the Division of Fire Safety and a provision of \$3 million for Urban Search and Rescue Teams.

"The attention New Jersey has given to fire safety education and the concerns of firefighters is paying off. The 1999 Uniform Crime Report showed a 17 percent decrease in reportable arsons, with those decreases holding steady in our preliminary report for 2000. Proudly, New Jersey also ranks third in the nation in lowest number of deaths per 1,000 fires," said DiFrancesco.