

N.J. EMTs protest Corzine's proposal to cut training fund

Posted by [ksantiag](#) May 06, 2009 20:42PM



Noah K. Murray/The Star-

Ledger Lisa Kaminsky, a Morris Minutemen EMT, at a rally on the Morristown Green. Morristown Ambulance Squad members and EMS volunteers protested today against the proposed budget cut on the EMT Training Fund.

MORRISTOWN -- Calling Gov. Jon Corzine's proposal to redirect millions from the EMT Training Fund a "raid," more than 60 volunteer ambulance squads and nearly 300 people from throughout the state held a protest tonight on the Morristown Green.

"It's about one voice and one message to the governor: Leave our training fund alone," said Dominick Sandelli, captain of the volunteer Morristown Ambulance Squad and organizer of the rally.

Part of Corzine's proposed budget calls for the reallocation of \$4 million from the fund to the general treasury in an attempt to relieve the budget crisis, officials said.

"It was a difficult decision. But we have to meet our constitutional obligation to balance the budget," said Tom Bell, a state treasury department spokesman.

"We found that there was a surplus of funds, and they can absorb the reduction without any programmatic impact," Bell said.

The fund helps maintain training for volunteer emergency medical technicians, Sandelli said.

Event organizers said it takes \$3.5 million annually to train volunteer EMTs statewide.

Volunteers fear the cut will discontinue training and lead to dwindling membership at various EMS agencies, Sandelli said. It would also likely force volunteers to pay for their own training.

The average cost of a 120-hour EMT course has soared in the past decade from \$200 to about \$800, Sandelli said.

The EMT Training Fund was established in 1992, Sandelli said. The fund is endowed by a 50-cent surcharge on tickets for moving violations issued in New Jersey.

"It was dedicated to us, and dedicated funds should be left for the purposes they were intended for," Sandelli said.

Hours before the event, Corzine announced that Elizabeth would receive \$3.8 million in grants to help build affordable housing in the area, as part of a Neighborhood Stabilization Program that will grant \$49.4 million to municipalities in the state.

But state legislators in attendance at the rally said less training potentially puts lives at risk.

"Who is more vulnerable than a person in need of emergency medical services?" said Assemblyman Michael Patrick Carroll (R-25th Dist.).

A spokesman for the governor said the cuts were unavoidable.



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LedgerSomerville EMT Lorriane Patel signs a board with names of EMTs and first aid volunteers who attended the rally in Morristown today.

"The governor faced some tough choices, but he made the right decisions for working families in New Jersey," said Robert Corrales, a Corzine spokesman, adding the proposed budget "invests in education and health care for children," and protects people most affected by the national economic crisis.

As New Jersey has both paid and volunteer emergency medical services, paid EMTs generally work for commercial providers, and services are billed to the provider or the patient, said New Jersey State First Aid Council President Sue Van Orden.

Volunteer EMTs and EMS agencies do not bill for services and they do not receive monetary compensation, she said.

"As volunteers, this fund is the only source for training. If this goes away, it will cost a lot of money for new EMTs and our volunteer membership is going to drop drastically," Van Orden said.

Tonight, Rick Heller, 47, an EMT for the Livingston First Aid Squad for the past 31 years, said the budget reallocation is foolhardy. Heller and hundreds of others were dressed in their blue rescue uniforms as the emergency lights from their ambulances lit up the Green.

"It's a bad decision to plug the budget," Heller said as emergency vehicles circled the Morristown Green looking for a place to park. "It's stealing from Peter to pay Paul."

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Comments

snowman33 says...

First Corzine eliminates volunteer position for those who work in state parks. Now he cuts funding for training of EMT volunteers.

What does he have against volunteers? Aren't these people the ones that save the taxpayers money.

Posted on 05/06/09 at 9:16PM

wereallblue says...

But yet they can shift 49 million to a bunch of undeserving spendthrifts who overbought housing and signed up for a mortgage they couldn't afford in a million years.

How do you steal from people volunteering their time to do an awful job (for free), only to give it to wastrels that don't earn their keep, much less volunteer to be EMT's?

Posted on 05/06/09 at 9:16PM

ireaddaily says...

The money is needed for housing and education for who? Wait, wait, wait.....let me guess.....Newark! When is the government going to learn, money designated for specific areas shouldn't be touched. This was a designated fund for the training of EMS volunteers. Leave it alone! This will result in another raise of property taxes when towns can't get volunteers and have to have paid squads. The federal government took money out of Social Security and now it is very low. The same thing is going on with