

(Trenton, NJ) – U.S. Rep. Rush Holt (NJ-12) today announced that the City of Trenton has received a \$14.9 million grant under the Staffing for Adequate Fire & Emergency Response (SAFER) program that will enable it to retain 55 firefighters and hire nine new firefighters.

“I was pleased to work closely with a task force of Trenton officials to secure these funds,” Holt said. “We owe Trenton residents the best possible protection from fire hazards, and we owe our first responders the equipment they need to do their jobs safely. At a time of very tight budgets, today’s grant will make a real difference in the lives of Trenton residents and firefighters.”

Qareeb Bashir, director of the Trenton Fire Department, intends to hold a formal press conference to announce the grant in the days ahead.

In July, the Trenton Fire Department (TFD) convened a task force devoted to securing a SAFER grant to avert potential fire department layoffs. Members of the task force were Qareeb Bashir, TFD Director; Rush Holt, member of Congress; Leonard Carmichael, TFD Deputy Chief; Mark Robotin, TFD Technology Officer; John Gribbin, retired Chief Fire Marshall; Lisa Willever, volunteer grant writer; Elana Chan, Trenton budget officer; and Janet Schoenhaar, Trenton Comptroller.

In August, Holt wrote a letter to FEMA in support of Trenton’s grant application, which read in part:

“Without renewed federal assistance the city faces having to lay off 55 firefighters, which would result in substandard emergency response capabilities to the residents of Trenton... At a time when state and local revenues are down and pressure to rein in unnecessary spending is increasing, the federal government can provide relief by facilitating much needed upgrades to local fire departments that will improve their ability to serve the public. Therefore, I respectfully request that your office give the Trenton Department of Fire and Emergency Service’s SAFER grant application all due consideration and hope that you will keep me advised of its progress.”

Holt also made phone calls to FEMA officials in support of the grant application.

The Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response Grants program was created to provide funding directly to fire departments and volunteer firefighter interest organizations to help them increase the number of trained, "front line" firefighters available in their communities. The goal of SAFER is to enhance the local fire departments' abilities to comply with staffing, response, and operational standards.