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Senator Anne Gobi Champions Property Tax Exemptions for Volunteer Firefighters, EMTs

BOSTON – On Thursday, the Senate debated a property tax bill aimed at expanding what cities and towns can offer in property tax deferral or exemption programs. The legislation includes benefits for active military personnel, senior citizens, and people with disabilities. The bill passed unanimously.

Senator Anne M. Gobi (D-Spencer) was successful in passing an amendment that provides tax benefits to volunteer firefighters and EMTs. Approved unanimously by the Senate, the amendment establishes a local option for cities, towns, and fire districts to provide a real estate tax exemption of up to \$2,500 for volunteer firefighters and EMTs.

“The towns in my district and many others are well served by our Call/Volunteer Firefighters and EMTs,” said Senator Gobi. “They sacrifice personal, family and work time and are willing to put their lives on the line to protect us. This is an opportunity for municipalities that choose, to show appreciation for their service and to encourage others to volunteer.”

The Commonwealth is protected by approximately 8,000 call/volunteer firefighters and EMTs. There are about 100 communities that rely entirely upon call/volunteer firefighters and another 160 that use a combination of call/volunteer and career firefighters. Each year, it becomes increasingly harder to keep these volunteers.

The National Volunteer Fire Council estimates that volunteer firefighters save communities in the United States more than \$139.8 billion a year. In the past decade it is estimated that the number of volunteer firefighters and EMTs has dropped by 15%. Senator Gobi’s amendment aims to encourage volunteer fire/EMT participation from citizens of the Commonwealth.

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