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# FEDERAL PROTECTIVE SERVICE REFORM VOTED OUT OF COMMITTEE

WASHINGTON – Legislation to reform the Federal Protective Service, which provides security to employees and visitors at 9,000 federal buildings nationwide, cleared the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee Wednesday. The Committee, led by Chairman Joe Lieberman, ID-Conn., and Ranking Member Susan Collins, R-Me., also approved the reauthorization of grant programs that help train, equip, and hire firefighters around the country.

The SECURE Facilities Act of 2011, S. 772, was approved by voice vote. The legislation would provide the troubled agency within the Department of Homeland Security with the resources it needs to maintain proper security, improve guard training, and put the agency on track to address the very real threat of explosives.

The Fire Grants Reauthorization Act of 2011, S. 550, was approved by a vote of 8-2.

“The FPS is a dysfunctional agency, struggling to perform its mission, and the evidence of that is overwhelming,” **Lieberman** said. “This legislation is urgently needed to set the agency back on course so it can protect the thousands of people who work and visit federal buildings.

“The fire grants reauthorization will help firefighters across the country meet the increased expectations of their communities since September 11 and Hurricane Katrina to prepare for and respond to disasters. More than ever, firefighters need the training and equipment to deal not just with fires but with hazardous materials, nuclear, radioactive and explosive devices, and other

potential threats. Unfortunately, fire departments throughout the country lack the training and equipment they need to do the job. This bill takes steps to address those shortcomings.”

**Collins** said: I am pleased the FIRE Act grants program is moving forward towards reauthorization as it provides fire departments with the support they need to purchase equipment and vehicles, and to conduct the training and exercises necessary to perform their jobs well. Indeed, this is one of the most successful programs administered by the Department of Homeland Security. The FIRE Act grants program is an efficient and effective model for delivering grant funding because it has a competitive process for evaluating applications, which are peer reviewed. It is also successful because monies are provided directly to local fire departments.

Federal Financial Management Subcommittee Chairman **Tom Carper**, D-Del., said: “The Fire Grants Reauthorization Act of 2011 is critically important to fire fighters and emergency service organizations throughout the country, and especially to our fellow fire men and women in Delaware. As co-chair of the Congressional Fire Services Caucus, I’m committed to ensuring our first responders get the tools they need. Many emergency services organizations have had to make drastic cuts in equipment and personnel due to the challenging economy and severely strained state and local budgets. This program allows our first responders to obtain essential grants that allow them to perform at their very best during times of crisis. I’d like to thank my colleagues on the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee for passing this life-saving bill.”

The bill would reauthorize the Assistance to Firefighters program (AFG), which funds equipment, training, and vehicles; the Fire Prevention and Safety Grants (FP&S), which support projects to increase the safety of the public and firefighters from fire and fire-related hazards; and the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response program (SAFER), which provides funds for hiring. The bill also includes a number of accountability measures, including performance assessments and a competitive award process.

The Committee failed to approve the Disaster Assistance Recoupment Fairness Act of 2011, S. 792, authored by Senator Mark Pryor, D-Ark., and designed to give the Federal Emergency Management Agency expanded authority to waive disaster aid repayments when FEMA erred in the original aid grant. The legislation will be reconsidered at another Committee meeting in the future.

