

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 6, 2014



The Honorable Pat Quinn
Office of the Governor
207 State House
Springfield, IL 62706

Dear Governor Quinn:

RE: Illinois Reciprocity for Military Firefighters

You know more than most how important our military families and veterans are in Illinois.

Illinois is home to over 700,000 veterans, including more than 85,000 who served over the last thirteen years during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Department of Defense invests a substantial amount of money to ensure that these airmen, soldiers, sailors, marines, and members of the Coast Guard receive world-class training to carry out life-saving missions across the world. These men and women should be able to transfer the skills and certificates they received during their time in the military to civilian life as easy as possible. However, currently that seamless transition is not possible in Illinois for military firefighters.

The State of Illinois, unlike our neighbors Indiana, Iowa, and Missouri, is not among the at least 38 states nationwide that offer automatic reciprocity for veterans and members of the military who possess Department of Defense-issued firefighter certifications. These individuals often possess advance rescue and lifesaving certifications, but are only offered a single opportunity to challenge Illinois' firefighter certification exams. In many circumstances this could cost each veteran thousands of dollars and hundreds of hours of time. This also affects members of the Illinois National Guard who are state employees, including those who participated in Illinois' Mutual Aid Box Alarm System, and responded to the November 17th tornado in Washington, Illinois. At a time when the national unemployment among Gulf War Era-II veterans is very high, government should make it easier to transition to civilian life and find a job, not create undue burdens.

We urge you to take action by Executive Order or other means to allow the State Fire Marshal to offer automatic reciprocity to veterans and members of the active duty, reserve, and National Guard that possess Department of Defense-issued firefighter certifications. By taking this action, you would also be following the recommendations of the Associated Fire Fighters Of Illinois - International Association of Fire Fighters, which supports this effort. If you have trained and served the United States military as a firefighter, then you should be able to serve your Illinois community as such. As these men and women return home, it is our duty to do all we can do to make their transition from the military to civilian life as seamless as possible.

We look forward to your swift action to remedy this problem and assist the men and women who have given so much to our country and now want to serve our communities in Illinois.

Sincerely,



Mark Kirk
United States Senator



Adam Kinzinger
Member of Congress



Rodney Davis
Member of Congress



Aaron Schock
Member of Congress



Randy Hultgren
Member of Congress



John Shimkus
Member of Congress

cc:

Illinois State Senate President John Cullerton
Illinois State Senate Minority Leader Christine Radogno
Speaker of the Illinois House of Representatives Michael Madigan
Illinois State House Republican Leader Jim Durkin