

Castle Receives Legislator of the Year Award from National Volunteer Fire Council, Discusses Key Issues with Delaware Volunteer Firefighters -- April 17, 2006

Odessa, DE -- Delaware Congressman Mike Castle, a member of the Congressional Fire Services Caucus, was presented today with the 2006 Legislator of the Year award by Delaware volunteer firefighters on behalf of the National Volunteer Firefighter Council (NVFC). Castle thanked the firefighters for their dedication and discussed pending national firefighter and homeland security issues in Washington that could affect them and the State of Delaware.

"Since my time as Governor, it has truly been my honor to work closely with our nation's volunteer firefighters. You put your lives on the line for our communities, and for that I thank you. It is truly amazing that greater part of our State is served almost entirely by volunteer first-responders - and their professionalism is evident when our communities are faced with emergencies, such as the crash of the C-5 plane a couple of weeks ago. Be it a plane crash, a hurricane, or a kitchen fire - your service to our nation is extremely vital. I am proud to be among you and look forward to working closely with the National Volunteer Fire Council to ensure you have the resources necessary to continue to get the job done," Castle said.

In the past year, Castle has been instrumental in authoring two pieces of legislation aiding volunteer firefighters. Castle's Good Samaritan Volunteer Firefighter Bill, which was included in the USA PATRIOT Act signed by President Bush in early March, would enable organizations to donate surplus firefighting equipment to needy fire departments. Additionally, he introduced legislation, "The Volunteer Firefighter and EMS Personnel Job Protection Act," to ease the ability of volunteer firefighters to ably respond to a "Presidentially-declared disasters, like Hurricane Katrina."

"Congressman Castle has a long history of outstanding support for the fire and emergency services in Delaware," said Jim Monihan, Chairman of the National Volunteer Fire Council's Legislative Committee and NVFC State Director from Delaware. "Way back when he served in the State Legislature, during his two terms as Governor, and continuing on today, Mike Castle has never wavered in his support for the volunteer fire service."

Castle has been supportive of many other issues of importance to the fire service. Last year, Castle voted in favor of legislation setting a hard date for turning over radio spectrum to first responders for communications interoperability. And he has consistently championed the Assistance to Firefighters Grant program (AFG) and the SAFER program, which provide funds directly to fire departments to purchase apparatus, equipment, training, fire health, safety, and education activities, and additional staffing. Earlier this year, Castle signed a letter to House Appropriators asking for increased funding for AFG and SAFER.