

Press Release of Senator Lautenberg

Lautenberg and Pascrell Introduce Legislation Aimed at Delivering Fire Safety Education to College Students

Grant Program Will Help Provide Fire Safety Education and Training for Students Enrolled in Higher Education

Contact: Lautenberg Press Office 202.224.3224
Tuesday, March 23, 2010

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Continuing in their commitments to make college student housing safer after the tragic fire at a Seton Hall University dormitory more than 10 years ago, U.S. Sen. Frank R. Lautenberg (D-NJ) and U.S. Rep. Bill Pascrell, Jr. (D-NJ-8) announced today that they have introduced legislation aimed at providing critical campus fire safety information to students living dormitories and off-campus housing.

“Education is prevention when it comes to fire safety at our college dorms and off-campus housing,” stated Lautenberg. **“The grant program in our bill would provide schools with new resources to give students the information they need to make life-saving decisions in the event of a fire and, hopefully, prevent fires altogether. Investing in fire safety education will help stop tragedies like the one we experienced at Seton Hall over a decade ago.”**

“I am proud of our efforts, starting with the passage of the Campus Fire Safety Right to Know Act and continuing today, to help make housing for college students safer, and better educate college students in how to live in these buildings safely and know what to do in the event of a fire,” said Pascrell. **“It’s hard to believe that more than 10 years have passed since that terrible fire at Seton Hall. But we remain as committed as we became on the day of that fire to doing everything we can to make our colleges students across the nation as safe as possible.”**

The Campus Fire Safety Act of 2010 would help provide fire safety education and training to students attending institutions of higher education. This objective would be met through a new \$25 million competitive grant program to initiate, expand or improve fire safety education programs at institutions of higher education. Priority would be given to programs that include educational material specifically prepared for students with disabilities.

Grants would be awarded for a two-year period and could be renewed for an additional two years at the discretion of the Secretary of Education. Awards would have a maximum size of \$250,000 per fiscal year. Grantees would be required to provide a 25 percent match of their award, which could be cash or in kind. Funds must be used to supplement, not supplant other funding for Campus Fire Safety Education.

The fire safety education programs developed by grantees must meet certain minimum requirements. Specifically, programs must:

- Reach all students enrolled at the school, including students living off campus,
- Conduct outreach to students a minimum of twice per academic year,
- Make fire safety information available to students at their request,
- Include minimum instruction on awareness of fire behavior, mechanisms of fire injury and death, common ignition scenarios, fire safety systems such as sprinklers, fire alarms, fire extinguishers and the importance of a means of egress.

Six months after the end of the grant period, the grantee must submit to the Secretary of Education a report on the results of an evaluation of the effectiveness of the program.

In 2008, the Higher Education Opportunity Act became law with provisions from the Campus Fire Safety Right-to-Know Act introduced by Sen. Lautenberg and Rep. Pascrell. The provisions aim to address concerns relating to fires in college dormitories and off-campus student housing by requiring schools to report fire safety information to the Department of Education and making this information publicly available to students and parents.

###