

Washington, D.C. – Congressman Tom Rooney (R-Fla.) voted today to pass the Fire Grants Reauthorization Act of 2009, H.R. 3791. This legislation reauthorizes the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) and Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) programs, collectively known as the “fire grants” programs, within Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The AFG Program competitively awards funds to local fire departments to purchase emergency response equipment and training.

“The Fire Grants Reauthorization Act is an important tool to help local fire departments and first responders the resources they need to react to any potential disaster or crisis,” said Rooney. “Several fire departments in the 16th district have benefitted from this program in the past and I will continue to work as a strong advocate for our local fire departments.”

The AFG program provides funds to local fire departments to purchase equipment, vehicles, and training. The SAFER program helps fire departments hire firefighting personnel and meet voluntary national consensus standards on safe minimum staffing levels. Both the AFG and SAFER programs are administered by FEMA. The bill authorizes \$1 billion for the AFG program per fiscal year from FY2010 to FY2014, and an additional \$1.194 billion per fiscal year from FY2010 to FY2014 for the SAFER program.

The legislation makes changes to the program to make it easier for local fire departments to take advantage of AFG and SAFER funding, such as lowering the matching requirements for the AFG program and modifying the time and matching commitments for the SAFER program.

H.R. 3791 will now be sent to the Senate for consideration.

Over the past year several fire departments in the 16th district have benefited from the SAFER grants. The Martin County Fire Department received \$3,576,540 from this program in January, St. Lucie County Fire Department Received \$1,517,320 in September of 2008, and the Labelle Fire Department received \$47,250 in November of 2008.