
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 798 Session of
2008

INTRODUCED BY LENTZ, BELFANTI, BROOKS, CALTAGIRONE, CIVERA,
DePASQUALE, FRANKEL, GEORGE, GOODMAN, HARKINS, HERSHEY,
W. KELLER, KENNEY, KULA, MELIO, R. MILLER, MURT, O'NEILL,
PAYNE, PETRARCA, REICHLEY, RUBLEY, SAYLOR, K. SMITH, SOLOBAY,
SWANGER, THOMAS, VULAKOVICH, WATSON, J. WHITE, HENNESSEY,
MOYER AND MYERS, JUNE 18, 2008

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS AND EMERGENCY
PREPAREDNESS, JUNE 18, 2008

A RESOLUTION

1 Memorializing the President and Congress of the United States to
2 amend the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968
3 to expand the definition of firefighter to include
4 apprentices and trainees, regardless of age or duty
5 limitations.

6 WHEREAS, On May 4, 2002, 14-year-old Christopher Kangas was
7 struck and killed by a car while riding his bicycle in response
8 to a fire in Brookhaven Borough, Delaware County, Pennsylvania,
9 one block from the firehouse; and

10 WHEREAS, In the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, an individual
11 may be a recognized firefighter in a local fire department with
12 certain limitations on the kind of work that individual can
13 perform at the scene of a fire and may be eligible for public
14 safety officer benefits; and

15 WHEREAS, Christopher Kangas was a trained firefighter,
16 recognized by the Borough of Brookhaven and the Commonwealth of
17 Pennsylvania, who knew what he could and what he could not do at

1 the scene; and

2 WHEREAS, After Christopher Kangas died, the Borough of
3 Brookhaven and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania gave him full
4 honors and recognition as a fallen firefighter, and the
5 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania also provided full benefits to his
6 family under the act of June 24, 1976 (P.L.424, No.101),
7 referred to as the Emergency and Law Enforcement Personnel Death
8 Benefits Act, as a fallen firefighter; and

9 WHEREAS, The representative of the President of the United
10 States to the Fire Service, United States Fire Administrator R.
11 David Paulison, sent a letter of condolence to the family
12 recognizing Christopher Kangas as a firefighter; and

13 WHEREAS, The Department of Justice, which administers section
14 1201 of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968
15 (Public Law 90-351, 42 U.S.C. § 3796), ruled that Christopher
16 Kangas was not a public safety officer despite the fact that the
17 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the Brookhaven Fire Department
18 legally maintained him on their rolls; and

19 WHEREAS, This ruling by the Department of Justice has denied
20 his family the \$267,000 line-of-duty benefit and has denied
21 Christopher Kangas his rightful place at the National Fallen
22 Firefighters Memorial in Emmitsburg, Maryland, alongside his
23 fellow fallen heroes; and

24 WHEREAS, The Department of Justice ruling not only ignored
25 the facts but also the letter and spirit of section 1201 of the
26 Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968, which
27 Congress enacted to provide benefits to any firefighter serving
28 as an officially recognized member of a legally organized fire
29 department, regardless of age or type of activities; therefore
30 be it

1 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the
2 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania memorialize the President and
3 Congress of the United States to enact H.R. 2224 or S. 1918,
4 each of which would amend the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe
5 Streets Act of 1968 to expand the definition of firefighter to
6 include apprentices and trainees, regardless of age or duty
7 limitations, applicable to death or injuries which occurred on
8 or after May 4, 2002; and be it further

9 RESOLVED, That a copy of this resolution be personally
10 presented to the family of Christopher Kangas and to the
11 Brookhaven Fire Department in recognition of Mr. Kangas's
12 dedication to the Borough of Brookhaven and the Commonwealth of
13 Pennsylvania as a firefighter; and be it further

14 RESOLVED, That a copy of this resolution be sent to the
15 President of the United States, to the presiding officers of
16 each house of Congress and to each member of Congress from
17 Pennsylvania.