

February 17, 2025

United States Senate
United States House of Representatives
Capitol Hill
Washington, DC

Ref: Honoring Our Fallen Heroes Act - S.237 (1/23/2025) H.R.1269 (2/12/2025)

Dear Honorable Members of the Senate and House of Representatives,

My name is Christopher Wyman, and I currently serve as a Lieutenant with the Merrimack, NH Fire Department. I am writing to request your support and co-sponsorship of the Honoring Our Fallen Heroes Act – S.237 / H.R.1269. This letter is written not on behalf of any organization, but in the memory of my wife and the other fire service families who are battling or have lost loved ones to occupational cancer. Lieutenant Jessica L. Wyman, DNP, of the Nashua, NH Fire Department, lost her life to occupational cancer incurred in the line of duty on November 28, 2023, at the age of 52. This correspondence is dedicated to sharing her story and advocating for the necessary legislative support.



Jess, born and raised in New Hampshire, always knew she wanted to be a Paramedic and a Fire Fighter. She achieved this goal in 1992 by joining the Merrimack, NH Fire Department, where she worked for nearly 10 years before transferring to the Nashua, NH Fire Department. Once in Nashua, in addition to her duties as a Fire Fighter, Jess joined the departments Hazardous Materials Response Team and Dive Rescue Team. She excelled as a Fire Fighter and was soon promoted to the rank of Lieutenant, becoming the first female fire officer in the department's history. Once she gained experience as an officer, she transferred to Engine Company 4, one of the city's busiest firehouses where she remained until her retirement after 26 years of service.

Even when not at the firehouse, Jess demonstrated her dedication to the fire service by becoming a Staff Instructor at the NH Fire Academy and a Rescue Specialist for Massachusetts Task Force 1 (MATF-1), part of FEMA's National Urban Search and Rescue Response System. She was deployed multiple times with MATF-1, but her most impactful deployment was to New Orleans in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. This experience profoundly affected her mentally and physically but also sparked a deep appreciation for the city's history and culture.

Outside of the fire service, Jess set extraordinary goals for herself and could easily make anyone smile or laugh. She could meet 200 strangers and leave with 200 friends. Excelling in competitive sports, Jess became a world-ranked power lifter and played soccer, hockey, and semi-pro football for the New Hampshire Freedom. Passionate about medicine, she worked as a nurse at Southern NH Medical Center and earned her Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) from Eastern Kentucky University in 2021.

Among her various achievements, her most notable accomplishment was the creation of Camp Fully Involved in 2007. Jess developed a weeklong program offered at the NH Fire Academy aimed at young women aged 15 to 20 who are interested in becoming Fire Fighters. Jess lived by the program's motto "Tell me and I forget, show me and I remember, involve me and I understand". Still operating today, Camp Fully Involved has attracted participants from the United States, Canada, France, and Japan.

In the fall of 2022, Jess became ill and was treated for pneumonia. When treatment throughout the fall failed, a chest CT in early January 2023 revealed she had stage 4 lung cancer that had metastasized to her bones. Jess bravely underwent chemotherapy and radiation for eleven months, enduring severe pain and spasms in her lower back. What she experienced in those 11 months was horrific to say the least, but she never lost her smile. Jess lost her battle on Tuesday, November 28, 2023, two days before our 27th wedding anniversary.

In December 2023, shortly after her death, the City of Nashua's workers compensation insurance accepted her cancer claim. On July 24, 2024, New Hampshire Governor Chris Sununu and the Executive Council approved line of duty death recognition and benefits in her honor. Independent investigations conducted by the City of Nashua, Worker Compensation, and the New Hampshire Department of Safety determined that her cancer was related to her duties as a firefighter for the City of Nashua.

I have recently become aware that the Department of Justice – Public Safety Officers Benefit Program (PSOB) does not acknowledge a line of duty death resulting from occupational cancer. I find it difficult to reconcile the fact that the National Fallen Fire Fighters Foundation has recognized her as a line of duty death and is honoring her by placing her name on the National Fallen Fire Fighters Memorial in May 2025, yet she does not qualify for PSOB benefits. Various toxic byproducts and carcinogens can be found in products of combustion in the fires we respond to every day. Even existing Fire Fighter protective equipment (PPE) contains chemicals that release suspected carcinogens from the PFOA (forever chemicals) materials they are manufactured from while we are wearing them, only adding insult to injury. As for Jess's cancer, if she had never been a Fire Fighter, she would not have been exposed to toxic environments and carcinogens that led to her aggressive cancer, which went undetected in all of her annual physical examinations.

As Fire Fighters, we understand that encountering fatal risks is an inherent part of our profession. We acknowledge the possibility of losing our lives in various ways during any incident, including the risk of cancer. Each time we respond to an emergency call, we consciously accept all of these potential hazards. Fire Fighters should receive equal consideration whether they die from incident-related injuries or cancer caused by the toxic exposures at the incidents we respond to. The PSOB program needs to be updated to reflect all of the hazards Fire Fighters and all public safety officers face daily while serving their communities.

Now, I'm asking you to respond to our call for help. Please support the Honoring Our Fallen Heroes Act – S.237 / H.R.1269 by co-sponsoring the bill. The benefits provided in the PSOB program can significantly help families manage the high costs of medical care and loss of wages associated with a cancer diagnosis and subsequent death of a loved one. In 11 months, Jess's medical expenses exceeded over half a million dollars. No family who has lost someone in the line of duty should be left behind.

Thank you for your time and consideration on this important piece of legislation. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at inspectorred@yahoo.com

Respectfully submitted,



Christopher T. Wyman
(Surviving spouse of Jessica L. Wyman)
Merrimack, New Hampshire