

**DUTCHESS-FAIRVIEW**  
**PROFESSIONAL FIRE FIGHTERS**  
LOCAL 2623 INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS  
AFFILIATED WITH N.Y.S. PROFESSIONAL FIRE FIGHTERS ASSOCIATION, INC.  
(845) 452-8770 258 Violet Avenue Poughkeepsie, NY 12601



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December 22, 2010

Mary Beth Pfeiffer  
Poughkeepsie Journal  
85 Civic Center Plaza  
Poughkeepsie, NY 12601

Dear Ms. Pfeiffer,

My name is Mark Bendel. I am a Professional Firefighter in Dutchess County, NY. I am also Vice-President of the Fairview Professional Firefighters, IAFF Local 2623, the union representing the Firefighters and Officers of the Fairview Fire District. I have read your investigative reports regarding the salaries, benefits, and pensions of public servants, specifically firefighters, published in the Poughkeepsie Journal. I have also read the data, research, and charts that you compiled for your articles. In one piece of correspondence you posted with your articles, you ask a Fire Chief if Firefighter salaries "seem high."

Today, two of my brother firefighters in Chicago, IL gave their lives while operating at the scene of a fire. In addition, more firefighters were seriously injured. This is just one example of the selfless risks and sacrifices made by firefighters everywhere, everyday. Firefighters, in the course of their duties, are regularly exposed to hazardous carcinogens as well as blood borne pathogens such as HIV, tuberculosis, and hepatitis. We carry out dangerous tasks, and take great risks to protect the public. None of those facts were included in either of your articles. Why is that?

It is true that we have all chosen this career path, and it is also true that we are well aware of the risks involved in our jobs when we sign up to do this. What the public and media always seem to miss is how our departments are so dangerously understaffed. We perform fire, rescue, and emergency medical duties with staffing that falls well below the nationally recognized safety standards. Your articles neglect to describe what is expected of firefighters while operating at an emergency scene. The technical aspects of our jobs are all but overlooked, likely because they do not make for as much of a story as the dollars and cents do.

I sincerely hope you and your family are able to have a quiet, enjoyable, and more importantly a safe holiday. This year, I, along with all of my brother and sister firefighters, police officers, and other public safety professionals will be on duty this Christmas. We stand ready to bring a little stability to what



could be an individual or family's worst moments. In Chicago, families will be receiving the American Flags that adorned the caskets of their fathers, brothers, sons, nephews, and friends.

We fight for you, we rescue you, and we die for you. No questions asked, and no recognition requested or expected. No matter what the political or public outcry, we go to work, we do our jobs, and we give the public 150% of ourselves, all day, every day. In my humble opinion, we are worth every dollar, and every cent.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Bendel', written in a cursive style.

Firefighter Mark Bendel  
Vice-President, IAFF Local 2623