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Cuomo Vetoes Volunteer Firefighter Benefits Bills.

ALBANY, N.Y. — Gov. Andrew Cuomo vetoed legislation that would have guaranteed job leaves for volunteer firefighters and ambulance workers during emergencies and another bill that would have extended coverage for their injuries in the line of duty outside the areas they regularly serve.

Authorizing leave when New York or the federal government declares a state of emergency would force staffing shortages and a financial burden on private and public employers, Cuomo said. Extending the injury coverage, similar to workers' compensation, would impose "an undue burden" on municipalities before they have the opportunity to opt out of its provisions, he said.

"I laud the sponsor's goal of better facilitating the efforts of volunteers to help with disasters," Cuomo said in a veto message. "However, this bill provides no standard by which an employer could reject an employee's request for leave even if the employee's services were needed."

The bills would have amended New York's labor and municipal benefit laws. The vetoes were announced Thursday.

Noting that federal law requires employers provide leave to National Guard and military reservists, sponsors urged similar protection for emergency responders, including for long-term call-ups to local emergencies and disasters. Under existing law, they can be forced to use vacation or sick time, forfeit pay or even lose their jobs for not going to work.