



**Transcript of Governor David A. Paterson's  
Remarks at the Fallen Firefighters Memorial Ceremony  
Fallen Firefighters Memorial, Albany  
Tuesday, October 7, 2008**

To the families of those who gave their lives to save others; to our distinguished public officials, particularly Senator Clinton, Mayor Jennings, Secretary Cortes-Vazquez and Chief Madison; to the firefighters from all around the state who have come to join us today; and to everyone else who cares deeply for those who cared so much about us, good morning.

We are here today to honor the sons, the brothers, the husbands, the fathers, the friends of many of you who gave the ultimate sacrifice in a way such that they will live forever even though they are not here with us.

This is obviously a solemn occasion, but this is not a mournful occasion. This is a celebration of valor. This is a celebration of virtue. This is a celebration of honor and dignity.

Firefighters are great people. They are unusually special people. They are individuals who, at some point in their lives, were either influenced by another, or saw something that struck a chord with them, or through their own devotion to others, engaged in the highest of the public services. They have offered to risk their lives to try to keep others safe.

And so, when we look at this wall, and we think about how many have been honored, sometimes even in our greatest faith, in our renewed dedication to our spiritual beliefs, we wonder, "How could this happen? Why does this have to happen? Why does there have to be so much suffering and sacrifice?"

Shakespeare once wrote, "Out of this nettle, danger, we pluck this flower, safety." We can count the names on that wall. But we cannot count the number of buildings that these firefighters have saved. We cannot count the number of people who still have their lives because of the great efforts of firefighters and fire departments all around this state.

In honoring them, we are honoring two other entities. We are, first, honoring the other firefighters who go out every day and continue to fight, even after they have seen what has happened to many of their colleagues, they continue to struggle against that impending fear that every firefighter has.

And secondly, we honor their families—the families who worry, the families who allow us to have the benefits of their services, those families who mourn them, those families who are still with them, and those families who have often given as much as even the victim has.

When Socrates wrote, "A person lives for as long as he is remembered," that is the basis for why we have this great wall on which we will inscribe ten new names today. A wall that has the signature of

a firefighter who died fighting a fire in 1811—that far back, 197 years ago—all the way up to the victims of the fire in the Deutsche Bank Building just last year.

There is a firefighter whose name will be put on the wall today from 1938. His great-grandson joins us today.

There are so many others who will adorn this wall in the future—but we hope none who will lose their lives from this day forward. Reality tells us that we have to be prepared for all circumstances. But I hope that the spirits will look down on us today and know that we tried, in the best ways that humans can, to promote the dignity of those who were superhuman.

Thank you very much.

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