NYC 9/11 Public Portal Document

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Bravest & Finest merit better pay



IF OR when someone presumes to fill those giant shoes of Rudy Giuliani, he will have to start with a clear view of the city's recent and horrific history.

And that is simply this: The first casualties were innocent civilians — but the front lines of the troops who went into battle were filled by firefighters and cops.

Having said that, we recognize that in recent days, our definition of "hero" has shifted from multimillion-dollar-a-year ballplayers and movie stars to people who actually give their lives for other humans.

And make no mistake, the firefighters and cops were heroes — in combat. And they deserve combat pay.

We pay our starting cops less than the 13 surrounding counties pay their officers to patrol quiet suburban streets.

I don't know a firefighter, young or old, who, hasn't had to take a second job to help pay the bills.

This isn't really a matter of money. It's a matter of how grateful this city is to its fallen Bravest and Finest.

Schoolteachers, however important they are to our future, get paid twice as much per hour as cops.

Pat Lynch, president of the Patrolmen's Benevolent Association, has said, "We have single adult men and women who are cops, having to live in the basement of their parents' homes because they can't afford to move."

The starting salary for a cop in New York City is $31,305. The top salary is $55,268. Suffolk County starts its cops at $42,496, and they can finish at $87,000

Right now, the cops have gone to the state in their fight for a 27 percent hike — which would give them the same pay as Newark officers.

But the city right now could — and, damn it, should — waive the Albany battle and say, "Thanks; done deal."

Firefighters start at $32,724, and the city has offered them a 5 percent hike through the Uniformed Coalition, headed by correction union boss Norman Seabrook.

"I have heard all the politicians' accolades and praise heaped on those brave firefighters," said Seabrook.

"If they are sincere, call us back to the table and make serious offers.

"Look, every one of those who died would do the same thing over again tomorrow if they had to — regardless of money."

I know that. Attending funerals of so many firefighters and cops has made that clear.

The job means everything to them, and money is an afterthought.

But, hey, out of respect, shouldn't we give them a respectable wage?

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