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GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

REAUTHORIZE THE ASSISTANCE TO FIREFIGHTER GRANTS (AFG) AND SAFER PROGRAMS IN THIS SESSION OF CONGRESS

The Assistance to Firefighters Grants (AFG) equipment program is one of the most efficiently run and effective programs in the federal government.

Funds are administered out of FEMA's staff account, so that nearly all AFG funds appropriated are distributed directly to local fire departments. Bureaucracy is minimal; local community benefit is maximum.

Through the FEMA program, fire departments of all sizes purchase personal protective clothing (PPE), self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA), personal alert safety system (PASS) devices, fire apparatus, and other essential safety and response equipment.

Fire and Rescue Service

Fire and rescue service personnel responded to over 33.6 million calls in 2015. As the aging population expands, this number is expected to increase significantly.

Local fire and rescue personnel represent the backbone of the nation's first response capabilities, serving as an integral part of our national comprehensive response strategy for both natural disasters and potential terrorism events. Recent severe weather events underscore the importance local first responders play in serving the public and protecting federal assets.

The nation has approximately 1.14 million fire and rescue personnel, with over 808,150 of these serving as volunteers (70%). Without such service, the nation's response capability would be seriously compromised and no longer universal, serving all communities.

FAMA and FEMSA represent the industry that "helps first responders save lives." Our U.S. members (243 companies) employ approximately 113,632 U.S. workers, and tend to be small and medium-sized businesses.

The “ASK” to Your Representatives

Please reauthorize funding for the Assistance to Firefighters Grants equipment program and SAFER for the next five years, by passing legislation in the House that mirrors or is similar to the Senate passed bill, S. 829.

The AFG and SAFER programs must be reauthorized for FY 2018. The Fire Service organizations agree to and support the major provisions of S. 829, including

1. Elimination of the sunset provision;
2. Extension of the authorization for the programs through Fiscal Year 2022;
3. Keep existing authorization levels.

Please encourage the House action on S 829 before the end of calendar year 2018.