

Background Talking Points for FAMA/FEMSA Hill Day Visits April 18-19, 2018

**FUND the ASSISTANCE TO FIREFIGHTER GRANTS (AFG)
EQUIPMENT PROGRAM at \$405 MILLION (FY 2019)**

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.

The Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 Appropriations Act funded the AFG program at a level of \$350 million, far less than the demonstrated need, and a 14% decrease from FY 2011 funding level of \$405 million. Compared to FY 2009 funding (\$565 million), this year's funding level represents a 38% cut in this important program.

However, Congress did increase AFG by \$5 million in FY 2018, and a \$5 million increase for SAFER as well. We thank Congress for doing what it could to respond to the shortfall in funding.

Further cuts in the AFG program would leave communities and their first responders short changed as local governments continue struggle to meet capital infrastructure needs.

Fire and Rescue Service

Fire and rescue service personnel responded to over 35.3 calls in 2016, up from 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.

The nation had approximately 1.09 million fire and rescue personnel in 2016, with 729,000 of these serving as volunteers (67%). 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 (241 companies) employ approximately 113,632 U.S. workers, and tend to be small and medium-sized businesses.

The Assistance to Firefighter Grants equipment program is extremely important to your state’s first responders. (Provide summary of Number and Size of AFG Awards to the State and Congressional District: See Handouts from firegrantdata.com.)

Over the last five years, the industry estimates that the cost of protective clothing (PPE) has increased by an estimated 11.4%; the cost of self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) increased 15%.

Since 2011, pumper trucks, which comprise about 60% of the apparatus market, have risen in cost an estimated 14.6% due to increase costs of materials and labor. On top of that, there have been cost increases of approximately 12% to meet mandatory EPA regulations and more stringent safety standards.

The “ASK” to Your Senators and Representatives

For FY 2019, please restore funding for the Assistance to Firefighters Grants equipment program by expressing to the Appropriation Committee Members your support for \$405 million (the FY 2011 level of funding of \$810 million for AFG and SAFER combined.)

Thank the Member for the small increase last year of \$5 million for AFG and \$5 million for SAFER.

Thank the Member for the passage of the reauthorization of the U.S. Fire Administration, AFG and SAFER programs at the end of the last session of Congress. Their support is greatly appreciated. The Reauthorization will ensure the programs will continue through FY 2023. However, the program does include a sunset clause (Sept. 30, 2024), so we will be counting on their support in the future.

Fund the U.S. Fire Administration in FY 2018 at \$50 million. USFA provides vital training to 100,000 first responder personnel annually, but over the last decade it has been cut approximately 25%.

Restore funding of the Urban Search and Rescue Response System to \$50 million. Over the last several years, Congress has funded the program at only \$35.18 million. The Urban Search and Rescue program is essential to our capacity to respond to dramatic natural and man-made events across the nation. We, unfortunately, see increased risk for both types of events in the foreseeable future.

If the Senator or Congressman is a member of the Congressional Fire Caucus, thank them for their membership. If they are NOT members, ask them to join.

Handouts for the Congressional Visit

- 10 Key Facts of the Fire Service (to be provided by FAMA/FEMSA GAC)
- Four-page foldout including summary of AFG program, AFG and SAFER historic funding levels, “Real Progress, Real Results” of the AFG program, and the FAMA/FEMSA employment map
- Report on Fire Departments Funded through the Assistance to Firefighters Grants program in the State and/or Congressional District (will be provided by FAMA/FEMSA GAC)
- Separate FAMA/FEMSA Map of 113,632 fire service industry jobs, including the list of FAMA and FEMSA U.S. member companies
- One-pager: Local First Responders Provide a National Service