

**Background Talking Points for FAMA/FEMSA Hill Day Visits April 24-25, 2019**

**FUND the ASSISTANCE TO FIREFIGHTER GRANTS (AFG)  
EQUIPMENT PROGRAM at \$405 MILLION (FY 2020)**

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) 2019 Appropriations Act flat-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 34.7 million calls in 2017. 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 1.056 million fire and rescue personnel in 2017, with 682,000 of these serving as volunteers (65%). 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 (over 250 companies) employ approximately 109,713 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](http://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 2020, 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.)

AFG and SAFER fire grant programs were flat funded last year at \$350 million each.

Fund the U.S. Fire Administration in FY 2020 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. In FY 2019, Congress took a major step in this direction by increasing funding for (USAR) by \$10.15 million to a level of \$45.18 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 109,713 fire service industry jobs, including the list of FAMA and FEMSA U.S. member companies
- One-pager: Local First Responders Provide a National Service