

Key Messages

for
FAMA/FEMSA 2019 Hill Day

The AFG Program

- **The Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) equipment program is one of the most effective and efficiently run programs in the Federal Government. Essentially all funding goes to local fire departments, both career and volunteer. The selection process includes peer review.**
- **The AFG program fills critical equipment gaps for the 1.056 million first responders**

who serve as the backbone of our nation's response capability for natural disasters and terrorist events. For example:

- ***50% of all fire departments lack enough portable radios to equip all responders on a shift;***
- ***53% of all fire departments cannot equip all firefighters on a shift with self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA);***
- ***72% of all fire departments have at least one piece of personal protective clothing that is 10 years old.***

Historic Funding of AFG

- In FY 2018 Congress funded the AFG program at \$350 million, down 38% from its FY 2009 level of \$565 million and 14% from its FY 2011 level of \$405 million. These are significant cuts.
- We thank Congress for acknowledging this shortfall by modestly increasing the AFG program by \$5 million for FY 2018 (in addition to \$5 million for SAFER). This was much appreciated, but more needs to be done.
- But in FY 2019, both AFG and SAFER were flat funded--\$350 million for each program, or \$700 million total.

Justification for the AFG and Fire Grant Programs

- *First responder calls continue to be in the millions. In 2017 the fire and rescue service made 34.7 million calls. Calls are likely to increase as the population ages and the demands of our emergency services increase.*
- By funding the AFG program, Congress supports our first responders as they meet increasing security and rescue needs. This is particularly important given recent increases in terrorism worldwide and the recent increase in the

severity of natural disasters—hurricanes, tornadoes, floods and wildfires.

- Local rescue departments are also dealing with the spike in drug overdoses as a result of the opioid and drug crises hitting communities of all sizes.
- *Local first responders are an integral part of the National Response Framework and therefore funding to support them supports a national security purpose. First responders also protect thousands of federal facilities daily.*

The ASK: Suggested Funding Levels for FY 2020

- In FY 2020, FAMA and FEMSA recommend restoring fire grant programs to 2011 funding levels-- \$405 million for AFG and \$405 million for SAFER (total: \$810 million).
- The U.S. Fire Administration should be funded in FY 2020 at \$50 million. USFA supports critical training for first responders—key to maintaining a cutting edge force nationally.
- We also are calling for The Urban Search and Rescue Response System (USAR) to be funded at \$50 million. The nation depends on USAR for its disaster response by sending specialized response units, based locally, to disasters across the country.

- We greatly appreciate Congress' funding USAR at \$45.18 million in FY 2019, a \$10.15 million increase over FY 2018.

The Fire Service Industry: FAMA and FEMSA

- FAMA/FEMSA members are U.S. based, smaller manufacturing companies accounting for 109,713 direct U.S. jobs. Therefore, when Congress funds AFG, it also supports U.S. manufacturing.
- Since 2011, the industry estimates that the cost of PPE has increased 11.4%. Self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) has increased an estimated 15%.
- Also, since 2011 there has been a sharp increase in the estimated costs of firefighting apparatus—an estimated increase of 14.6% attributed to material and labor costs, and an additional 12% increase due to EPA regulations (with additional regulations being added between now and 2021) and more stringent safety standards.

Conclusion: Repeat the ASK—Invitation to Join Fire Caucus

We thank you for funding the AFG and SAFER programs in the past. We ask that you restore the funding of these programs at \$405 million (\$810 million total) for FY 2020.

Your support is much appreciated.

If you are not a member of the Congressional Fire Caucus, we encourage you to join.