

Key Messages

for
FAMA/FEMSA 2020

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 over 1.1 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 2020 Congress funded the AFG program at \$355 million, down 37% from its FY 2009 level of \$565 million and 12% 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 2020 (in addition to \$5 million for SAFER). This was much appreciated, but more needs to be done.**

Justification for the AFG and Fire Grant Programs

- ***First responder calls continue to be in the millions. In 2018 the fire and rescue service responded to 36.7 million calls, up from 34.7 million in 2017. 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 the outbreak of the COVID-19 Pandemic, as well as recent increase in the severity of natural disasters—hurricanes, tornadoes, floods and wildfires.**

- As America's first responders combat the COVID-19 Pandemic, they not only face tremendous personal health risk, but their departments are threatened by fiscal pressures, furloughs, and layoffs.
- Fire and EMS budgets now face an average cost increase of over 30% due to COVID-19.
- Fire and EMS teams are facing longer shifts by over 26%, on average, so that teams can plan and prepare for COVID-19-related calls and priorities.
- Nearly 90% of all cities and towns, which typically employ first responders and legally cannot run budget deficits, expect severe budget shortfalls in 2020.
- Through 2022, local government shortfalls are projected to be over \$500 billion.
- In April 2020 alone, local government employment was down by 801,000 employees, compared to pre-COVID levels.
- It is estimated that COVID-19 could lead to state revenue shortfalls of nearly \$650 billion over the next three years.
- As our first responders continue to fulfil their role to locally execute the nation's response to COVID-19, operating budgets are decreasing and capital budgets risk

being frozen or zeroed-out. As state and local budgets are constrained, it is critical that AFG funding is expanded to support first responders in our nation's hour of need.

➤ *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 2021

➤ *In FY 2021, 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 2021 at \$50.7 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 \$50.7 million in FY 2021 (from \$37.83 million in FY 2020). The nation depends on USAR for its disaster response by sending specialized response units, based locally, to disasters across the country.*

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.**

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 2021.

Your support is much appreciated.

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