

Members of the VCOS,

I am William "Bill" Gulbrandsen and would like to serve as your Director At-Large on the VCOS Board. With over 34 years experience, I was chosen as the first Fire Chief for Sumter County when the County Commission decided to unify 10 Volunteer Depts. in 2002. Since that time we have grown into a true "Combination-Type" fire service, operating 11 stations and handling 7,000 calls annually. Like many of you, I have earned a couple of A.S. Degrees, a B.P.A. and have attended N.F.A. post-graduate programs. My REAL education however, has been from the volunteer firefighters and officers that I have had the privilege to serve with as we have built S.C.F.R. into one of the premiere Combination Fire Departments in Florida.

I can now share this experience and speak frankly about the pros and cons of consolidation, what works and what to avoid. In these economically challenging times we must all learn from each other. Identified in 2007 as Florida's Fire Chief of the Year, I accepted that recognition on behalf of all of our members who have worked so hard to prove "Excellence through Unity". In building a new county-wide service within 7 years, we have recent experience with implementing multiple revenue sources including; Service Benefit Units, Taxing Units, Impact Fees and User Fees to reduce reliance on General Fund Tax Dollars.

Over 70% of America's population receives services from Volunteer and Combination Depts. As tax revenue decreases, the proven efficiency of Volunteer and Combination departments as a cost effective means to provide Quality Fire and Rescue Service will gain in numbers to again become the focus of America's Fire Service. I am prepared and willing to assist as the VCOS finds its new leadership role within the IAFC. Thank you, William "Bill" Gulbrandsen