

## Talking Points for September 20 AFG/SAFER Open House

- This week is Fire Prevention Week, when the nation focuses on preventing fire deaths, injuries, and property loss. Americans are urged to check their smoke detectors, plan escape routes in case of fires, and take other steps to make their homes fire safe. This year, Congress can play a role by passing the Fire Grants and Safety Act (S. 870/H.R. 4090) to help local fire departments protect their communities.
- The Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) program and Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant programs fund peer-reviewed, matching grants to local fire departments. The AFG program funds training and equipment for local fire departments along with fire prevention programs and research to prevent death, injury, and property loss due to fires. The SAFER grants can be used to hire career firefighters and recruit & retain volunteer firefighters.
- **According to federal law, the AFG and SAFER programs are scheduled to be terminated on September 30, 2024.**
- **We need Congress to pass the Fire Grants and Safety Act to preserve these programs.**
- Fire departments provide response for all types of emergencies: fire, EMS, active shooter incidents, wildfires, hurricanes, hazmat incidents, technical rescues, and other types of disasters.
- However, they face critical needs, especially because of the COVID-19 pandemic:
  - Fire and EMS departments face staffing and recruitment and retention challenges nationwide.
  - The supply chain problem increased the cost of fire apparatus and equipment by 20% - 25%.
  - The delivery time for a Type 1 fire apparatus was 9 - 14 months. *That period has now almost doubled to 25 – 28 months.*
- Fire departments are suffering from shortages in basic requirements. Consider the following examples from the National Fire Protection Association's (NFPA) Fifth Needs Assessment of the U.S. Fire Service:
  - More than half of fire departments have unmet needs in structural firefighting.
  - Only half of all fire departments can equip on-duty first responders with portable radios.
  - Nearly two-thirds of fire departments have firefighters wearing personal protective clothing that is over 10 years old – past the recommended lifespan.
  - Fifty-three percent of all departments cannot equip all firefighters on a shift with self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA).
- The AFG and SAFER program provide funding to help fire departments meet these basic requirements. We need to preserve these programs in the future.

- In April, the Senate passed S. 870, the Fire Grants and Safety Act, to protect these programs. The House Science, Space, and Technology Committee marked up its companion bill, H.R. 4090, in June.
- We ask Congress to take action to pass the Fire Grants and Safety Act this year.