INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE CHIEFS
LEGISLATIVE HOT SHEET

A Guide for Talking with Members of Congress

November 2026

The 119th Congress

Protect the FIRE/SAFER Grant Programs

- The Problem: As fire departments continue to respond to a variety of increased threats, the strain on fire department equipment and personnel remains high. As equipment and overtime/backfill costs escalate, many fire departments across the country cannot afford the equipment, training, and staffing necessary to meet a baseline level of readiness. This situation puts firefighters and their communities in danger. The Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG; also known as "FIRE grants") and Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grants provide matching grants to meet these needs. As the Trump Administration looks to put greater responsibility for disaster response on local communities, the AFG and SAFER program will be more important to prepare fire and EMS departments to protect their communities.
- The Solution: The FIRE and SAFER grant programs augment local funding and provide much needed assistance to meet these needs. Congress authorized $750 million each for the FIRE and SAFER grant programs through Fiscal Year (FY) 2028 as part of the Fire Grants and Safety Act (P.L. 118-67). However, we still must fund these important programs. For FY 2026, the House and Senate agreed to fund the AFG and SAFER programs at $342 million each. As Congress begins work on the FY 2027 appropriations, the House is proposing an increase to $351 million for each program.
- The Explanation: *If you have received a grant under the FIRE or SAFER grant programs*, explain how you used the money and how it has improved your ability to serve your community in response to all hazards. *If you have not received a grant under these programs*, explain how you could use that grant money. Give a specific example of how a FIRE or SAFER grant has helped or could help you serve your community.
- The "Ask:" Please ask your representatives and senators to fund the AFG and SAFER grant programs at the authorized level of $750 million for each program.

Protect and Fund the U.S. Fire Administration and the National Fire Academy

- The Problem: The U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) provides necessary training through the National Fire Academy (NFA), and policy resources to local fire departments. It also is deploying the National Emergency Response Information System (NERIS) to replace the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS). It is important that USFA be funded to continue its critical mission.
- The Solution: Congress passed the Fire Grants and Safety Act (P.L. 118-67) in 2024. The law authorizes $95 million for USFA through FY 2028. Congress appropriated more than $71 million for USFA in FY 2024 and FY 2025 to develop the NERIS. For FY 2026, the House and Senate agreed to appropriate $72.14 million for the USFA. As Congress begins work on FY 2027 appropriations, the House is proposing an increase to $83.27 million for the USFA.

- The Explanation: Explain the importance of increasing the USFA's budget and how the implementation of the new NERIS will help fire departments obtain real-time information about fires in their region and across the nation. Also, please explain why the NFA is important for the development of future leaders of the American fire service.
- The "Ask:" Please ask your representatives and senators to fund the USFA and the NFA at the authorized level of $95 million.

Preserve the FirstNet Authority

- The Problem: Congress created the First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet) to establish a nationwide public safety broadband network. The network gives public safety users both ruthless preemption and priority on their own spectrum. FirstNet has been used in numerous major disasters by public safety agencies, including active shooter incidents, wildland fires, and hurricanes. FirstNet has more than seven million subscribers. Unfortunately, FirstNet is scheduled to be sunset and end operations on February 22, 2027.
- The Solution: Congress must pass legislation to remove the February 22, 2027, sunset date to prevent FirstNet's termination. Representatives Neal Dunn (R-FL) and Jennifer McClellan (D-VA) introduced the First Responder Network Authority Reauthorization Act (H.R. 7386) to extend the federal FirstNet Authority until September 30, 2037. The IAFC and a coalition of national organizations representing fire, EMS, law enforcement, and state and local government agencies negotiated a compromise to ensure that FirstNet remains "by public safety, for public safety." The IAFC-supported, amended version of H.R. 7386 passed the House Energy and Commerce Committee on March 25 by a vote of 51-0. The full House of Representatives passed the bill on April 20. We now are awaiting Senate consideration of H.R. 7386.
- The Explanation: If you are a subscriber to FirstNet, explain how it helps your operations during daily incidents and major disasters. Explain why it is important to have reliable communications during incidents and why it is important to have a network dedicated to public safety.
- The "Ask:" Ask your senators to preserve the federal FirstNet Authority by passing H.R. 7386.

Develop Federal Standards for Lithium-Ion Batteries and Micromobility Devices

- The Problem: The nation has witnessed an increase in deadly fires caused by lithium-ion batteries in micromobility devices. The lithium-ion batteries can become overcharged or damaged and create explosive, deadly fires that put both firefighters and the public at risk.
- The Solution: Representative Ritchie Torres (D-NY) and Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) introduced the Setting Consumer Standards for Lithium-Ion Batteries Act (H.R. 973/S. 389). This bill would require the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) to issue safety standards on lithium-ion batteries in micromobility devices. On April 28, 2025, H.R. 973 passed the House of Representatives by a vote of 365-42. S. 389 was marked up by the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation on March 12, 2025, and awaits consideration by the full Senate. On May 21, this legislation was added to the BUILD America 250 Act (H.R. 8870), otherwise known as surface transportation reauthorization/highway bill. The lithium-ion battery bill now either awaits consideration by the full Senate as H.R. 973/S. 389 or will be included in H.R. 8870 if it is passed by the House and Senate. On June 24, the CPSC released draft regulations for lithium-ion batteries in micromobility devices for public comment. The IAFC provided comments to the CPSC on August 24.
- The Explanation: By directing the CPSC to develop safety standards for lithium-ion batteries and micromobility devices, Congress can ensure that these devices are fire-safe. In addition, local jurisdictions can remove older devices that do not meet the standards.

- The "Ask:" Please ask your senators to cosponsor and pass the Setting Consumer Standards for Lithium-Ion Batteries Act (H.R. 973/S. 389). Also, ask them to support the provisions to create fire safety standards for lithium-ion batteries in e-mobility devices in the BUILD America 250 Act (H.R. 8870).

Preserving AM Radio in New Vehicles as a Free, Standard Service

- The Problem: AM radio has long served as a dependable means of communication, especially in situations where other forms of communication may be compromised. Recently, auto manufacturers have threatened to remove AM radios from new cars.
- The Solution: Representative Gus Bilirakis (R-FL) and Senator Ed Markey (D-MA) introduced the AM Radio for Every Vehicle Act of 2025 (H.R. 979/S. 315). This legislation would require every newly manufactured car to include AM Radio as a free service. S. 315 was passed by the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation on February 5, 2025. H.R. 979 was passed by House Committee on Energy and Commerce on September 17, 2025, and it passed the full House of Representatives on September 15, 2026. On May 21, this legislation was added to the BUILD America 250 Act (H.R. 8870), otherwise known as surface transportation reauthorization/highway bill. The AM Radio bill now either awaits consideration by the Senate (H.R. 979/S. 315) or can be included in H.R. 8870 if it is passed by the House and Senate.
- The Explanation: The IAFC supports legislation that would require every newly manufactured vehicle to include an AM radio. Some electric vehicle manufacturers have claimed that AM radios cause unnecessary interference. However, this is unproven. First responders rely upon AM radio to disseminate important critical alert information. AM radio's ability to alert the public is essential in rural areas or at times when other means of communication have failed.
- The "Ask:" Ask your senators to cosponsor and support the AM Radio for Every Vehicle Act of 2025 (H.R. 979/S. 315). Also, ask them to support the AM radio provisions in the BUILD America 250 Act (H.R. 8870).

Improving the Nation's Response to Wildland Fires

- The Problem: The nation continues to face the risk of severe wildland fires that risk American lives and property. In 2025, there were 77,850 wildland fires that consumed more than 5 million acres.
- The Solution: In 2023, the Congressionally created Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission made 148 recommendations about how to improve the national response to wildland fires. Senator John Curtis (R-UT) introduced the Fix Our Forests Act (S. 1462) to implement almost 50 of the commission's recommendations. It also would improve coordination of federal wildland fire preparedness efforts; promote the use of prescribed fires and other measures to prevent WUI fires; and promote the development of new technologies to help local fire departments. S. 1462 passed the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry on October 21, 2025, and it awaits consideration by the full Senate. A companion bill (H.R. 471) passed the House on January 23, 2025.
- The Explanation: S. 1462 would allow the U.S. Fire Administration to be more engaged in federal wildland fire policy by including it in the governance of a new Wildfire Intelligence Center and a Community Wildfire Risk Reduction program. The bill also would promote land management activities to reduce the hazardous fuels load.
- The "Ask:" Ask your senators to cosponsor and pass the Fix Our Forests Act (S. 1462).

Providing Reimbursement for EMS Treatment in Place

- The Problem: Fire departments are currently unable to bill CMS or insurance providers for patient care that does not result in transporting the patient to a hospital emergency room.

- The Solution: Representative Mike Carey (R-OH) introduced the CARE Act of 2025 (H.R. 2538). This legislation would create a pilot program within the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation to test a reimbursement model for EMS treatment in place. Senator Susan Collins (R-ME) introduced the Senate companion bill (S. 3145) on November 6, 2025.
- The Explanation: The IAFC strongly supports reimbursement models that help cover costs of EMS care when patients are not transported to the hospital emergency room. Taking every EMS patient to the hospital emergency room results in unnecessary costs for the patient and the system. It also ties up EMS providers that could be otherwise in-service for their communities. Reimbursing treatment on scene with no transport will make fire-based EMS systems more financially stable by being able to cover the costs associated with EMS calls that do not result in transport.
- The "Ask:" Ask your representatives and senators to cosponsor the CARE Act of 2025 (H.R. 2538/ S. 3145), respectively.

Ensure Fire-Based EMS Providers are Counted

- The Problem: Currently, dual-role firefighter/EMTs and firefighter/paramedics are not counted in the Department of Labor's (DOL) statistics on EMS providers.
- The Solution: Representative Glenn Thompson (R-PA) introduced the EMS Counts Act (H.R. 3791) on June 5, 2025. This legislation would have the DOL create subcategories of "firefighter" to include their EMS credential like firefighter/EMT and firefighter/paramedic.
- The Explanation: By not including dual-role firefighters, the DOL is not counting the nation's largest provider of EMS services in their statistics on the EMS workforce. Including dual-role firefighters in the statistics will allow for more accurate emergency preparedness actions and provide the best data for future EMS research.
- The "Ask:" Ask your representative to cosponsor and pass the EMS Counts Act (H.R. 3791).

Prevent Promotion of Single Stair Code Buildings

- The Problem: As part of the 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act (P.L. 119-101), the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) must develop guidance, including model code language, for single-stair apartment buildings that are between four and six stories.
- The Solution: Congress has the ability to reverse this section by not funding the actions. Congress may include language in the upcoming FY 2027 and FY 2028 appropriations bills restricting the use of funds to carry out the single stair provisions (Section 102) of the 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act.
- The Explanation: Single stair apartment buildings (buildings with only one internal staircase) greater than four stories are dangerous both to residents and to firefighters. In the event of an emergency, residents are forced into the same single stairwell as firefighters. This leaves a single point of failure where occupants can become trapped in the floors above a fire and be exposed to toxic byproducts of combustion. Preserving two stairwells in buildings greater than four stories preserves the critical second way out of every building and ensures occupants always have a safe way out during a fire.
- The "Ask:" Ask your representatives and senators to prohibit appropriations from carrying out Section 102 of the 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act (P.L. 119-101).

For further information about federal legislative issues, please visit the IAFC's Government Relations and Policy Department at (703) 273-0911 or go to www.iafc.org/gr. The IAFC publishes a weekly Washington Update with federal government news. In addition, you can follow @IAFC on X (formerly known as Twitter) for real-time updates and information.