



## INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE CHIEFS LEGISLATIVE HOT SHEET

*A Guide for Talking with Members of Congress*

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**November 2024**

### **The 118<sup>th</sup> 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 Solution:** The FIRE and SAFER grant programs augment local funding and provide much needed assistance to meet these needs. President Biden signed the Fire Grants and Safety Act (P.L. 118-67) on July 9. The new law will authorize \$750 million each for the FIRE and SAFER grant programs through Fiscal Year (FY) 2028. It also will delay the elimination of the programs to September 30, 2030. However, we still must fund these important programs. Congress approved \$324 million each for the FIRE and SAFER grant programs in FY 2024. *This is a 10% cut to both programs.* The House of Representatives passed its FY 2025 U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Appropriations Act (H.R. 8752) with \$367.5 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 senators to fund the AFG and SAFER programs at the House-passed level of \$367.5 million each.

#### **Funding for the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) and National Fire Academy (NFA)**

- **The Problem:** The U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) provides necessary training and policy resources to local fire departments. Currently, it is developing the National Emergency Response Information System (NERIS) to replace the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS). In addition, USFA also is developing latest programs to support fire-based EMS. It is important that USFA be funded to continue its critical mission.
- **The Solution:** President Biden signed the Fire Grants and Safety Act (P.L. 118-67) on July 9. The new law will authorize \$95 million for USFA through FY 2028. Congress appropriated more than \$71 million for USFA in FY 2024. For FY 2025, President Biden is proposing \$78.6 million for USFA, which includes funding for upgrades at the National Fire Academy (NFA). In H.R. 8752, the House appropriated \$78.3 million for USFA.
- **The Explanation:** Explain the importance of increasing 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.

- The “Ask:” Please ask your senators to fund the USFA at President Biden’s requested \$78.6 million in FY 2024 to fund the NERIS program, maintain the NFA’s buildings, and upgrade its information technology infrastructure.

### **Reauthorize the National Firefighter Cancer Registry**

- The Problem: Cancer is a major cause of death for firefighters. According to a study by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), firefighters have a 9% increase in cancer diagnoses and a 14% increase in cancer-related deaths than the public. The International Agency for Research on Cancer has classified the occupational exposure of firefighters as “carcinogenic to humans.”
- The Solution: The nation’s fire and emergency service requires cancer researchers and medical professionals to identify the causes of cancer in firefighters and develop ways to prevent cancer. The [National Firefighter Registry for Cancer](#) is a repository designed to collect anonymous information from firefighters. Researchers will be able to use this information to identify ways to prevent cancer in the fire and emergency service.
- The Explanation: Congress appropriated \$5.5 million for the national registry in FY 2024. However, the authorization for the program expired in FY 2022. Congress needs to reauthorize funding for this program. The Firefighter Cancer Registry Reauthorization Act (H.R. 3821/S. 2119), by Representative Bill Pascrell, Jr. (D-NJ) and Senator Robert Menendez (D-NJ), would authorize \$5.5 million for the National Firefighter Registry for Cancer from FY 2024 through FY 2028. The House passed H.R. 3821 on March 6. Now the Senate must pass H.R. 3821 in order for it to become law.
- The “Ask:” Please ask your senators to pass the Firefighter Cancer Registry Reauthorization Act (H.R. 3821).

### **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. 1797/S. 1008). This bill would require the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) to issue safety standards on lithium-ion batteries in micromobility devices. The House passed H.R. 1797 on May 15 by a vote of 378-34. Now the Senate must pass H.R. 1797 in order for it to become law.
- 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 pass the Setting Consumer Standards for Lithium-Ion Batteries Act (H.R. 1797).

### **Eligibility in the Federal PSOB Programs for the Families of Fallen Public Safety Officers Due to Cancer**

- The Problem: The U.S. Department of Justice’s Public Safety Officers’ Benefits (PSOB) program is designed to help the families of fallen public safety officers that died in the line of duty. Unfortunately, the program does not recognize deaths and disabilities of public safety officers from job-related cancer-causing exposures. However, studies by the National Institute for Occupational Health and Safety found that firefighters face a 9% increase in cancer diagnoses and a 14% increase in cancer-related deaths, when compared to the general U.S. population.

- The Solution: Representative Bill Pascrell, Jr. (D-NJ) and Senator Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) introduced bipartisan legislation, the Honoring Our Fallen Heroes Act (H.R. 1719/S. 930), to grant eligibility for the PSOB program to the families of public safety officers that die or are disabled from cancer due to job-related exposures. S. 930 was reported by the Senate Judiciary Committee on June 5.
- The Explanation: Under H.R. 1719/S. 930, a public safety officer would have to have been exposed to “heat, radiation, or a carcinogen that is linked to an exposure-related cancer while in the course of the line of duty.” The public safety officer also would have to have served for five years as a public safety officer before the cancer diagnosis, and the diagnosis would have to occur not later than 15 years after than the last day of active service for the public safety officer.
- The “Ask:” Ask your representatives and senators to cosponsor and support passage of the Honoring Our Fallen Heroes Act (H.R. 1719/S. 930).

### **Reauthorize 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 both 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. More than 27,500 public safety agencies and organizations are subscribers to FirstNet. Currently, FirstNet is scheduled to be sunset and end operations on February 22, 2027.
- The Solution: Representative Lizzie Fletcher (D-TX) introduced legislation, H.R. 3366, to authorize FirstNet permanently and remove its sunset date.
- 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 representatives to cosponsor and pass H.R. 3366.

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