



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE CHIEFS LEGISLATIVE HOT SHEET

A Guide for Talking with Members of Congress

January 2025

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 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, 2024. 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) on June 28, 2024, with \$367.5 million for each program. Meanwhile, the U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee recommended \$360 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 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). 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, 2024. 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 passed \$78.3 million for USFA. The U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee recommended \$80.6 million for the 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 representatives and senators to fund the USFA at the U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee’s recommended level of \$80.6 million in FY 2025 to fund the NERIS program, maintain the NFA’s buildings, and upgrade its information technology infrastructure.

Save 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: Congress must pass legislation to remove the February 22, 2027, sunset date to prevent FirstNet’s termination.
- 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 legislation to save FirstNet.

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. This bill would require the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) to issue safety standards on lithium-ion batteries in micromobility devices.
- 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 representatives and senators to cosponsor and pass the Setting Consumer Standards for Lithium-Ion Batteries Act.

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: In the last Congress, Representative Bill Pascrell, Jr. (D-NJ) and Senator Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) introduced bipartisan legislation, the Honoring Our Fallen Heroes Act, 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.

- The Explanation: Under the Honoring Our Fallen Heroes Act, 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 pass the Honoring Our Fallen Heroes Act.

Promote Nationwide Adoption of Next Generation 9-1-1 Technology

- The Problem: Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG 9-1-1) technology provides an opportunity for the public to provide a wealth of information to Emergency Communications Centers (ECC), including text, video, and location information. This information can help local fire and EMS departments to provide better lifesaving aid to their communities. However, it will be expensive to modernize many ECCs that are working with outdated technology. As the economy begins to slow down, communities will not have the funds to make the investment into NG 9-1-1.
- The Solution: Congress must pass legislation to authorize up to \$15 billion to fund the nationwide transition to NG 9-1-1.
- The Explanation: The IAFC supports legislation that would provide \$14.8 billion for federal grants for NG 9-1-1 deployment. It also would create a Public Safety Advisory Board composed of local public safety officials to provide guidance to the federal government about the rollout. The bill also would provide funding for training for ECC staff to help them sort through the information that they receive and provide valuable information to the incident commander on scene. In addition, the bill also would include a Nationwide NG 9-1-1 Cybersecurity Center to ensure the cybersecurity of the nationwide NG 9-1-1 system.
- The “Ask:” Ask your senators and representatives to cosponsor and pass NG 9-1-1 legislation.

Encourage the Installation of Automatic Fire Sprinklers in High-Rise Buildings

- The Problem: Residential high-rise buildings present special fire prevention and response issues. The vertical nature of the building and combustible cladding can lead to faster fire and smoke spread. There also can be challenges in evacuating a high-rise building and problems with water pressure within the building.
- The Solution: Automatic fire sprinkler systems are a key fire prevention tool. They can reduce the civilian death rate in a fire by 89% and the risk of death to firefighters by 60%.
- The Explanation: The High-Rise Fire Sprinkler Incentive Act would amend the U.S. Internal Revenue Code to classify automatic fire sprinkler system retrofits in residential high rises as a 15-year property. This legislation will provide a tax incentive for building owners to retrofit their high rises with automatic fire sprinklers. A high rise is defined as a residential building with an occupiable floor more than 75 feet above the lowest level of fire department vehicle access.
- The “Ask:” Please ask your representatives and senators to cosponsor and pass the High-Rise Fire Sprinkler Incentive Act.

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. In addition, you can [follow @IAFC on X \(formerly known as Twitter\)](#) for real-time updates and information.