

Key Messages

for

FAMA/FEMSA 2013 Hill Day

The Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) equipment program is one of the most effective and efficiently run programs in the Federal Government—*historically* only 5% of funds are used for administration.

The AFG program fills critical equipment gaps for the 1.1 million first responders who serve as the backbone of our nation's response capability for natural disasters and terrorist events. For example:

- 51% of all fire department lack enough portable radios to equip all responders on a shift;
- 51% of all fire departments cannot equip all firefighters on a shift with self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA);
- Three out of five (63%) departments have at least one piece of personal protective clothing that is 10 years old;

The Full Year Continuing Appropriations Act of 2013 (HR 933) funded the AFG program at only \$337.5 million, down 40% from its FY 2009 level of \$565 million and 17% from its FY 2011 level of \$405 million. These are significant cuts.

(Plus, the program was subject to an additional \$17 million cut from sequestration, bringing its FY 2013 level to approximately \$320 million.)

Yet first responder calls continue to climb dramatically to their current level of 30.1 million calls per year. These calls will continue to increase as the population ages and the demands of our emergency services increase.

The President proposed an FY 2014 fire grants funding level of \$670 million--\$335 million to the AFG (equipment) program, and \$335 million for SAFER (for hiring).

FAMA and FEMSA would like to see the AFG program funded at \$340 million in FY 2014, along with \$340 million for the SAFER (hiring) program. The House included these levels in their recently passed 2014 DHS Appropriations Bill.

We would also like to see the U.S. Fire Administration funded in FY 2014 at \$44 million (the President proposed \$41.3 million).

The Urban Search and Rescue Response System, which the nation depends upon for disaster response, should be funded at \$50 million (the President proposed only \$27.5 million).

Local governments and their fire and rescue departments continue to feel the brunt of the recession with continued strain on local operating and capital budgets due to the slow recovery. We expect local government budgets to remain weak throughout the year and into the future.

FAMA/FEMSA members are U.S. based, smaller manufacturing companies accounting for 90,700 direct U.S. jobs.

By funding the AFG program, Congress will support our first responders as they meet increasing security and rescue needs, while creating U.S.-based jobs.

We want to thank you for reauthorizing the AFG and SAFER programs last year, but we opposed the “sunset” provision contained in the law and hope to work with you in the future to reauthorize this extremely popular and worthwhile program. The current reauthorization goes through FY 2017.