

# Key Messages

for

FAMA/FEMSA 2017 Hill Day

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- The Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) equipment program is one of the most effective and efficiently run programs in the Federal Government.

*All appropriated funds go to help meet the needs of fire and rescue departments. The program is administered through a separate Department of Homeland Security (DHS) salaries and expenses account. Grant awards are made through an effective peer review process (which keeps administrative costs low) and highly effective FEMA staff.*

- The AFG program fills critical equipment gaps for the 1.14 million first responders

*who serve as the backbone of our nation's response capability for natural disasters and terrorist events. For example:*

- *50% of all fire departments lack enough portable radios to equip all responders on a shift;*
- *53% of all fire departments cannot equip all firefighters on a shift with self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA);*
- *72% of all fire departments have at least one piece of personal protective clothing that is 10 years old.*

- In FY 2016 Congress funded the AFG program at \$345 million, down 39% from its FY 2009 level of \$565 million and 15% from its FY 2011 level of \$405 million. These are significant cuts.

- We thank Congress for acknowledging this shortfall by modestly increasing the AFG program by \$5 million for FY 2016 (in addition to \$5 million for SAFER). This is much appreciated, but more needs to be done.
- Since 2011, the industry estimates that the cost of PPE has increased 11.4%. Self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) has increased an estimated 15%.
- Also, since 2011 there has been a sharp increase in the estimated costs of firefighting apparatus—an estimated increase of 14.6% attributed to material and labor costs, and an additional 12% increase due to EPA regulations (2007 and 2009) and more stringent safety standards.

*Yet first responder calls continue to climb to their current level of 33.6 million calls per year. These calls will continue to increase as the population ages and the demands of our emergency services increase.*

- In the FY 2017 Continuing Resolution, FAMA and FEMSA recommend AFG program funding of \$345 million for the remainder of FY 2017, along with \$345 million for the SAFER (hiring) program.
- In FY 2018, FAMA and FEMSA recommend restoring funding levels to 2011 levels, \$405 million for both AFG and SAFER.

- In addition, it is extremely important that you support reauthorization of the AFG and SAFER programs in this session of Congress.
  
- The Fire Service organizations support a reauthorization package that essentially keeps the programs as currently structured.
  
- Our preference would be for Congress to consider and approve a straightforward reauthorization that –
  1. Extends the authorization for the programs through Fiscal Year 2022; and
  2. Eliminates the sunset provision.
  
- We understand that the Senate will introduce a reauthorization shortly. It will likely be a straight reauthorization for the next 5 years, which we support.
  
- We also understand that the House Science and Technology Committee, which has jurisdiction in the House, plans to hold a reauthorization hearing in the near future.
  
- Please support these efforts to reauthorize the legislation in this session.

- Also, in FY 2018, The U.S. Fire Administration should be funded at \$45.6 million, equal to its 2011 level. USFA's budget has been reduced 25% over the last decade. USFA trains approximately one million fire and emergency response personnel annually.
  
- The Urban Search and Rescue Response System, which the nation depends upon for disaster response, should be funded at \$50 million. If this level is not possible, we recommend increasing its funding above the FY 2016 level of \$35.18 million.
  
- These programs remain important in part because local governments and their fire and rescue departments continue to recover slowly from the brunt of the Great Recession.

*Local government revenues remain below pre-recession levels and spending demands are on the rise, especially in infrastructure, health care and pension costs. The current local government revenue base is only 96% of the 2006 base. This represents a lost decade of local revenue growth. (National League of Cities Fiscal Conditions Survey 2016).*

- FAMA/FEMSA members are U.S. based, smaller manufacturing companies accounting for 113,632 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. This is particularly important given recent increases in terrorism worldwide and the recent increase in the severity of natural disasters.
- Local rescue departments are also dealing with the spike in drug overdoses as a result of the opioid crisis hitting communities of all sizes.

**We thank you for funding the AFG and SAFER programs in the past. We ask that you maintain the funding of these programs at \$345 million (\$690 million total) through FY 2017, and that you restore funding for each program at \$405 million through FY 2018.**

**If you are not a member of the Congressional Fire Caucus we encourage you to join.**

**Your support is much appreciated.**