



METROPOLITAN FIRE CHIEFS ASSOCIATION LEGISLATIVE HOT SHEET

A Guide for Talking with Members of Congress

April 2026

The 119th Congress

Protect the FIRE/SAFER Grant Programs and Start Their Application Periods

- **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. *However, Congress has yet to pass the final version of the FY 2026 Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Appropriations bill. The Federal Emergency Management Agency’s (FEMA) grants office is not funded, which will delay the application periods for the AFG and SAFER programs.*
- **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. Congress approved \$324 million each for the FIRE and SAFER grant programs in FY 2024 and FY 2025, and President Trump is proposing these funding levels in his FY 2027 budget request. *This was a 10% cut to both programs from the FY 2023 levels.* For FY 2026, the House and Senate agreed to fund the AFG and SAFER programs at \$342 million each, but Congress cannot reach agreement on the final DHS appropriations bill to fund FEMA and the grant programs.
- **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 pass the FY 2026 DHS Appropriations bill and restore funding to the AFG and SAFER grant programs.

Protect and Fund the U.S. Fire Administration and Re-Open 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. **Currently, the National Fire Academy is closed due to the lapse in DHS funding.**

- 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. In addition, President Trump is proposing approximately \$70 million for the USFA for FY 2027. *However, Congress has yet to pass the final version of the FY 2026 Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Appropriations bill, which closed the NFA.*
- 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. If you were scheduled to take a class at the NFA, explain how NFA’s closure affected your plans.
- The “Ask:” Please ask your representatives and senators to re-open the NFA by passing the FY 2026 DHS Appropriations bill and funding the USFA.

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 must vote on H.R. 7386. Meanwhile, we are awaiting Senate action to preserve FirstNet.
- 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 preserve the federal FirstNet Authority by passing H.R. 7386.

Protection of The Development of Lifesaving Codes and Standards

- The Problem: National voluntary consensus codes and standards are used every day to make the world safer. Standards, like the National Fire Protection Association’s (NFPA) National Electric Code are required in all 50 states. These standards are developed using a voluntary consensus process that includes all stakeholders. The codes and standards cover everything from firefighter bunker gear to how to respond to an active shooter incident to the health and safety physicals that are given to firefighters. Unfortunately, some special interests want NFPA and other nonprofits that develop codes to lose their copyright protection whenever a code is incorporated by reference. Developing those codes and standards is expensive, and standards development organizations (SDOs) rely on sales of their codes and standards to support that work.
- The Solution: Senator Chris Coons (D-DE) and Darrel Issa (R-CA) introduced the Pro Codes Act (H.R. 4072/S. 4145) to protect the copyrights of codes and standards developed by non-profits SDOs like the NFPA.

- The Explanation: SDOs, like the NFPA, routinely make their codes available for inspection by the public for free on their websites and in public libraries. However, the NFPA must charge a fee for the purchase of its codes to continue to fund the update of codes and standards and the development of new codes and standards. The Pro Codes Act (H.R. 4072/S. 4145) protects the intellectual property of these SDOs and ensures the continued use of a voluntary consensus process for developing lifesaving codes and standards.
- The “Ask:” Ask your senators and representatives to cosponsor and support passage of the Pro Codes Act (H.R. 4072/S. 4145).

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.
- 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).

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: Representative Nicole Malliotakis (R-NY) and Senator Michael Bennet (D-Co) introduced the High-Rise Fire Sprinkler Incentive Act (H.R. 173/S. 504). The bill 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 (H.R. 173/S. 504).

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 representative to cosponsor and support the CARE Act of 2025 (H.R. 2538/S. 3145).

Expanding Grant Programs for Community Paramedicine/Mobile Integrated Health

- The Problem: Community Paramedicine and Mobile Integrated Health (CP/MIH) programs do not have direct federal funding.
- The Solution: Representatives Emmanuel Cleaver (D-MO) and Diana Harshbarger (R-TN) introduced the Community Paramedicine Act of 2025 (H.R. 4011) on June 13, 2025. This legislation would allow existing rural health development grants to fund CP/MIH programs.
- The Explanation: The IAFC supports efforts to reimburse and fund CP/MIH programs, which have shown to cause better patient outcomes and reduce visits to the emergency room. CP/MIH programs are spreading across the country despite a lack of a stable federal funding source. This legislation will allow communities to develop and expand CP/MIH programs in a financially stable way.
- The “Ask:” Ask your representative to cosponsor and support the Community Paramedicine Act of 2025 (H.R. 4011).

Oppose Single Stair Building Proposals

- The Problem: Amid the push for affordable housing, building groups and affordable housing advocates are advocating for allowing single-stair residential buildings up to eight stories. Single stair multi-family residential buildings over four stories pose challenges to firefighting operations and present an unreasonable risk to public safety. Recently, the House of Representatives included a single-stair provision in the Housing for the 21st Century Act (H.R. 6644), but the provision was removed in the Senate-amended version.
- The Solution: Current NFPA and ICC codes allow for single-stairwell, multifamily residential structures for buildings no more than four stories tall. This allows the secondary point of egress to be ladders thrown by responding firefighters and apparatus.
- The Explanation: Recently, affordable housing advocates and homebuilders have advocated for changing the limit to six or even eight stories tall. These changes would increase the number of residents coming down the single staircase and leave residents on upper floors with only one way out. Residents will interfere with firefighting operations and will not have safe havens in stairwells in single-stair buildings. Single-stair buildings over four stories pose an untenable risk to the safety of the building’s occupants and responding firefighters.
- The “Ask:” Please ask your representatives and senators to oppose any single-stair legislation or provisions and keep single-stair provisions out of the 21st Century Housing Act (H.R.6644).