



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS

NEWS from Fire Fighters

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White House Proposed Cuts to Homeland Security Budget Will Hurt Response to Terrorist Attacks/Major Disasters

Irresponsible Homeland Security Budget Shows Lack of Concern for America's Communities

WASHINGTON, DC - The General President of the International Association of Fire Fighters, AFL-CIO/CLC, Harold Schaitberger, issued this statement today regarding the Fiscal Year 2007 budget proposal released by the White House today:

“It is an incredible display of arrogance that this President can have watched – and indeed presided over – the massive failures in the government’s response to Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma last year, then propose major cuts to the portions of the homeland security budget that prepare our nation’s first responders to protect the American people in those emergencies.

“That’s the context in which the budget for 2007 was issued today by the administration. The budget proposal cuts funding for the FIRE Act by \$257 million – a 47 percent decrease from last year’s approved budget and a 60 percent reduction over the past three years. It also provides zero dollars to provide much-needed fire fighters in the more than two-thirds of communities that already have inadequately staffed fire departments.

“These are major reductions in FIRE Act funding that come on the heels of disappointing cuts for the past two years in a row. However, each time the Republican-controlled Congress, with bi-partisan support, passed significantly more than the President proposed in his budget.

“Why are the priorities of this White House so different than the priorities of the many Republicans in Congress who have had to vote every single year since 9/11, with the support of many Democrats, to increase funding over and above the insufficient levels proposed by the President for first responders in the event of an attack? Would the President have responded differently in his budget if Katrina was the name given to a dirty bomb exploded by terrorists in the center of New Orleans?

“For fire fighters, it doesn’t really matter if the destruction is wrought on our country by terrorists or a natural disaster. Our citizens depend on us to respond effectively.

“We will work with Congress once again to come to the rescue of the American people and to do what’s necessary to protect our homeland by preparing a responsible alternative to the White House’s 2007 failure of a budget.”

The IAFF, headquartered in Washington, DC, is the 12th largest union among the 54 national unions that makeup the AFL-CIO. The IAFF represents more than 270,000 professional fire fighters and emergency medical personnel who protect 80 percent of the nation’s population. More than 2,900 affiliates serve nearly 6,000 communities in Canada and in every state in the U.S. For more information, visit www.iaff.org.

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