



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS

NEWS from Fire Fighters

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Congress Funds Public Safety Program Providing Grants to Communities to Hire Fire Fighters

Washington, DC – Struggling communities will have access to \$742.5 million in grants to maintain and improve public safety in neighborhoods across the country following approval today by Congress of the 2012 Omnibus Appropriations.

Public safety in communities across the United States has been put at risk, as fire fighter and paramedic positions have been lost, targeted for elimination or have been left unfilled after a vacancy due to funding shortages as the prolonged economic downturn has decimated local tax revenue. But passage of the 2012 Omnibus Appropriations enables communities to reverse that dangerous trend, with grants providing funding for as many as 7,000 fire fighter and paramedic positions.

The appropriations bill includes \$337.5 million for Fiscal Year 2012 for the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant program. More importantly, it preserves rules allowing communities to use the grants to hire fire fighters and keep fire fighters on the job where budgets are tight. The bill also allows communities to use \$405 million in SAFER grants for Fiscal Year 2011 – money that was previously approved – to hire, rehire or retain fire fighters. Fiscal 2011 SAFER funding had been on hold until Congress clarified that the grants could be used to hire, rehire and retain fire fighters. Now communities will soon be eligible to apply for Fiscal 2011 and Fiscal 2012 SAFER grants.

“A majority of lawmakers in Washington have shown they understand that public safety at the local level is the frontline of homeland security. The SAFER grant program improves public safety and creates jobs in these tough economic times – it’s a win-win,” International Association of Fire Fighters General President Harold Schaitberger said.

Administered through the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the SAFER program to date has put more than 5,000 fire fighters back to work, giving a much-needed boost to public safety in countless struggling communities.

“Staffing shortages are a direct threat to public safety. Closing fire companies and fire stations to compensate for staffing shortages aggravates the problem, putting residents, businesses and fire fighters in even greater danger. Public safety is a cornerstone of small business security in communities across the country, and I urge municipal leaders everywhere to work closely with local fire fighters to secure SAFER grants to make neighborhoods safer and more capable of growth once again,” Schaitberger said.

The International Association of Fire Fighters, headquartered in Washington, DC, represents more than 300,000 full-time professional fire fighters and paramedics and is the leading advocate for the health and safety of first responders. More information is available at www.iaff.org

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