



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS

HAROLD A. SCHAIBERGER
General President

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General Secretary-Treasurer

2010 IAFF Congressional Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Name: _____

Campaign Name: _____

Campaign Address: _____

City: _____ **State:** _____ **Zip:** _____

Campaign Phone Number: (_____) _____

Fax Number: (_____) _____

Email Address: _____@_____

Website Address: _____

Campaign Manager (Name): _____

Campaign Manager (Phone Number): (_____) _____

Office Sought: U.S. Senate: _____

House District (District #) : _____

Party Affiliation: _____

Filing Deadline (Date): _____

Do you have Primary Election opposition? (Please circle one) Yes No

If yes, what is the Primary Election date: _____

Run-Off Election Date: (if applicable) _____

Primary Opponent's Name(s): (if applicable)

General Opponent's Name: (if known and applicable)

Have you received an endorsement for any IAFF Local(s)/State Association for your current campaign? (Please circle one)

Yes No

If yes, please list which IAFF Local(s)/State Association:

What is your campaign budget? (Please provide a copy of your campaign budget plan)

Primary: _____

General: _____

Have you ever run for or held an elective office? (Please circle one) Yes No

If yes, what office and when?

Office

Dates Ran/Held

Were you endorsed by the IAFF in any of your previous elections? (Please circle one) Yes No

If yes, which IAFF Local(s)/State Association endorsed you and for which campaign?

1. Public Safety Employer-Employee Cooperation Act

Fire and police departments benefit immeasurably from productive partnerships between employers and employees. Studies have shown that communities which promote such cooperation enjoy more effective and more efficient delivery of emergency services. Such cooperation, however, is difficult in states that do not provide public safety employees with the fundamental right to bargain with their employers.

Over the years, Congress has expanded the scope of collective bargaining laws to cover private sector employees, non-profit association employees, transportation workers, federal government employees and, most recently, congressional employees. One of the few groups of workers not covered by a federal law is state and local government employees, including public safety officers.

Most states have enacted legislation providing meaningful collective bargaining rights for fire fighters, but many have not. The results of this uneven application of collective bargaining rights are labor-management breakdowns, which can endanger the public safety. Many, including the IAFF, believe that the best way to address this issue is to pass a national collective bargaining bill, which would guarantee a minimum standard of collective bargaining rights for all state and municipal fire fighters.

While Congress has historically given states and localities wide latitude in managing their own employees, the increasing role of the public safety community in homeland security creates an obligation for the federal government to ensure that public safety officers have basic collective bargaining rights.

In the 111th Congress, the Public Safety Employer-Employee Cooperation Act has been introduced in the House by Representatives Dale Kildee (D-MI) and John Duncan (R-TN) as H.R. 413 and in the Senate by Senator Judd Gregg (R-NH) and the late Senator Ted Kennedy (D-MA) as S. 1611. This legislation enjoys broad bipartisan support in both chambers. In the 110th Congress, the bill passed the House by a vote of 314-97.

The legislation establishes minimum standards for state collective bargaining laws, including: 1) the right of public safety officers to bargain over wages, hours, and working conditions; 2) a dispute resolution mechanism, such as fact finding or mediation; and 3) enforcement of contracts through state courts. The legislation expressly prohibits strikes and lockouts, does not infringe upon right to work laws, and does not interfere with existing state laws and collective bargaining agreements. The IAFF supports the Public Safety Employer-Employee Cooperation Act.

Do you support or oppose the Public Safety Employer-Employee Cooperation Act?

2. Health Care Reform – Taxing Health Insurance Benefits

Congress is currently debating legislation to reform our nation's health care system. In the course of this debate, several proposals have been put forward that would tax the value of a person's health insurance benefits above a certain threshold. Proponents of such proposals believe that by capping the amount of health insurance benefits that are tax-free, employers will offer lower-cost health insurance plans for their workers, thereby slowing the overall growth of health care spending.

Behind this reasoning is an assumption that these high-value health insurance benefits are so-called "Cadillac Plans" that provide unnecessarily generous benefits. In many instances, however, this is not the case. Fire fighters, for example, have higher-cost health insurance plans than the average worker because of the inherent health hazards associated with performing their jobs.

As a result, a tax on high-value health insurance plans would disproportionately impact America's fire fighters. If implemented, many middle-class fire fighters and their families would either see an increase in their taxable income by thousands of dollars each year or see their health insurance benefits cut to a dangerously low level. In the wake of 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina, where emergency responders were exposed to numerous toxic substances and continue to suffer from the health effects of these toxins, the IAFF believes that curbing health care costs should not be done in a way that inequitably punishes fire fighters' health insurance plans. This would not only put fire fighters' health and well-being in danger, it would also threaten our nation's public safety. It is for this reason that the IAFF opposes any proposal to tax employer-provided health insurance benefits.

Do you support or oppose a tax on employer-provided health insurance benefits that exceed a certain value?

3. FIRE and SAFER Funding

Recognizing the importance of ensuring that fire departments are well-equipped and fully staffed, Congress has established both the Assistance to Firefighters Grants (FIRE) program and the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) program. Under the FIRE program, grants are provided to fire departments and other emergency response entities to pay for training, equipment and other critical needs. Under SAFER, fire departments can obtain grants to help pay for the costs associated with hiring and retaining personnel. If fully funded, SAFER grants could lead to the hiring of as many as 75,000 new fire fighters over the next 7 years.

The critical importance of adequate fire department staffing has been well documented by independent studies. Both the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), the consensus standards-making body of the fire service, and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) promulgated standards for the minimum number of fire fighters needed to respond safely and effectively to emergencies. An estimated 2/3 of all jurisdictions do not currently meet these safe staffing levels.

A study conducted by the U.S. Fire Administration found most fire departments unable to respond to many common emergencies. A study by the Boston Globe found that fire departments are no longer meeting national standards for response times, and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) has identified lack of staffing as a key cause of fire fighter fatalities on the fireground.

Do you support or oppose fully funding the FIRE and SAFER programs?

4. Mandatory Social Security Coverage

When the Social Security system was created in 1935, government employees were intentionally excluded. Even when state and local governments were given the option to join the system in the 1950s, many fire departments were still legally barred from electing Social Security coverage up until 1994. Because of this exclusion from the Social Security system, fire departments were forced to create their own pension systems that do not take into account Social Security. These comprehensive plans are tailored to meet the unique needs of fire fighters by taking into account the early retirement ages, high rates of disability and the need for extensive health care that is characteristic of public safety occupations.

Proposals to bring all public sector workers into the Social Security system have often surfaced as part of a broader debate over restructuring the Social Security system. Advocates of mandatory coverage cite the increased revenue that would be reaped from the additional participants in the system. They also argue that many government workers qualify for Social Security benefits – either through their spouse or by participating in the system at a second job – and that it is unfair to exempt such people from paying Social Security taxes at their primary occupation.

Opponents of mandatory coverage, including the IAFF, reply that existing pension systems do a much better job of providing for their workers’ retirement security than Social Security, and these specialized retirement plans would likely be curtailed or abolished if employers and employees were forced to pay into Social Security. Further, the Social Security benefits paid to workers who qualify for Social Security from a second job or a spouse are significantly reduced, so they are not receiving any benefit to which they are not fully entitled. Finally, opponents note that the added revenue to the Social Security Trust Fund would be minimal, and not worth the disruption in the retirement security of millions of government workers.

Do you support or oppose universal Social Security coverage for non-covered state and municipal government employees?

5. Federal Fire Fighter Presumptive Disability

Fire fighters are exposed on a daily basis to stress, smoke, heat and various toxic substances. As a result, fire fighters are far more likely to contract heart disease, lung disease or cancer than other workers. And as fire fighters increasingly assume the role of the nation's leading providers of emergency medical services, they are also exposed to infectious diseases. These diseases are now among the leading causes of death and disability for fire fighters, and numerous studies have found that these illnesses are occupational hazards of fire fighters.

In recognition of this link, more than 40 states have enacted "presumptive disability" laws, which presume that cardiovascular diseases, certain cancers and certain infectious diseases contracted by fire fighters are job-related for purposes of worker's compensation and disability retirement unless proven otherwise. No such law covers fire fighters employed by the federal government.

Under the Federal Employee Compensation Act (FECA), federal fire fighters must be able to pinpoint the precise incident or exposure that caused a disease in order for it to be considered job-related. This burden of proof is extraordinarily difficult for fire fighters to meet because they respond to a wide variety of emergency calls, constantly working in different environments under different conditions. As a result, very few cases of occupational disease contracted by fire fighters have been deemed to be service-connected.

In the 111th Congress, bipartisan legislation to address this problem has been introduced in the House by Representatives Lois Capps (D-CA) and Todd Platts (R-PA) and in the Senate by Senators Tom Carper (D-DE) and Susan Collins (R-ME). This legislation, the Federal Fire Fighters Fairness Act (H.R. 948/S. 599), would create a rebuttable presumption that cardiovascular disease, certain cancers and certain infectious diseases are job-related for the purpose of qualifying for workers' compensation and disability retirement benefits.

Do you support or oppose the Federal Fire Fighters Fairness Act?

6. Fire Fighter Safety Standards

Each year, more than 100 fire fighters die in the line of duty. Tens of thousands are also injured on the job. Sadly, many of these deaths and injuries are completely preventable.

With the input of all relevant stakeholders, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), the consensus standards-making body of the fire service, has developed industry safety standards intended to help reduce the number fire fighters injured or killed in the line of duty. Among other things, these standards include requirements for protective equipment, safe staffing and fire ground operations, training, fitness and incident command. However, compliance with these standards is voluntary and they are ignored by many fire departments. IAFF believes that this lack of compliance is one of the most critical issues facing the fire service at present.

In the 111th Congress, legislation has been introduced in the House by Representative Ed Perlmutter (D-CO) and in the Senate by Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH) that would take a step toward correcting this problem. This legislation, the Fire Fighter Fatality Reduction Act (H.R. 1499/S. 602), would direct the Department of Homeland Security to conduct a study to determine the level of compliance by fire departments across the United States with the NFPA's voluntary safety standards. The bill would also create a Task Force to Enhance Fire Fighter Safety that would develop a plan to increase national compliance with the NFPA's standards.

Do you support or oppose the Fire Fighter Fatality Reduction Act?

7. Aircraft Rescue and Fire Fighting Standards

The federal government's standards for aircraft rescue and fire fighting are decades-old and no longer conform to the fire fighting needs of our nation's airports. For example, under current rules, fire fighters are prohibited from entering a burning aircraft, leaving fire fighting and passenger rescue efforts inside the plane to its flight crew. Fire fighters must remain outside the aircraft and assist only those passengers who are able to exit the plane. Standards such as these place the crews and passengers of airplanes in unnecessary and avoidable danger.

In an effort to address this problem, legislation recently passed by the House to reauthorize the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) included a requirement that the FAA put forward new regulations governing aircraft rescue and fire fighting (H.R. 915). Under this requirement, the FAA must, among other things, update the mission and responsibilities of aircraft rescue and fire fighting personnel, determine appropriate levels of personnel staffing, issue guidance for the handling of incidents involving hazardous materials, and address the need for modernized equipment.

IAFF believes that updating the FAA's aircraft rescue and fire fighting standards is critical to ensuring the safety of air transport in the United States.

Do you support or oppose the adoption of modernized aircraft rescue and fire fighting standards such as those included in the House-passed FAA reauthorization bill?

Please return completed questionnaire to:

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