

THE
FEEDERLINE

4TH QUARTER, 2024

The Voice on the Job for Greensboro's Bravest





THE MISSION OF PFFG LOCAL 947 IS TO BE A VEHICLE FOR POSITIVE CHANGE WITHIN THE GREENSBORO FIRE DEPARTMENT THAT UTILIZES AND PROMOTES TRADE-UNIONISM AMONG THE MEMBERS AND THE COMMUNITY, BUILDS POLITICAL POWER FOR THE GOOD OF THE FIRE-FIGHTERS, PROMOTES THE MOST ADVANCED AND SAFEST PRACTICES OF OUR PROFESSION, AND PARTICIPATES IN CHARITABLE EVENTS IN THE COMMUNITY IN WHICH WE SERVE.

Principal Officers

President

Dave Coker, SAF1-B

Vice-President

Justin Price, Training

Secretary

Vincent Messina, E10-B

Treasurer

Brian Green, L11-B

Executive Board

Marcus Cox, Fire & Life Safety

Justin Hite, L11-C

Tyler Hoke, L11-A

Jonathan Moore, E19-A

Ricardo Reyes, E4-C

Station Reps

Station 1

Dave Coker

Station 2

Gabriel Gomez

Station 4

Ricardo Reyes

Station 5

Vacant

Station 7

Justin Patterson

Station 8

Kevin Chesley

Station 10

Ty Jenks

Station 11

Justin Hite

Station 14

Matt Cross

Station 17

Vacant

Station 18

Naomie Dixon

Station 19

Jonathan Moore

Station 20

Kevan Nowling

Station 21

Jamie Harvey

Station 40

Maurice Jones

Station 41

JW Lopossay

Station 43

Shannon Boller

Station 48

Vacant

Station 49

Vacant

Station 50

Vacant

Station 52

Stephen Guthrie

Station 53

Matt Landreth

Station 56

Cody Stone

Station 57

Vacant

Station 59

John Rogers

Station 61

Tanner Honeycutt

Station 63

Jason Chamberlain

Training Division

Justin Price

Fire & Life Safety

Marcus Cox

From the Desk of the President



When the new Executive Board takes office in January 2025, it will mark the first time in nearly a quarter-century that Vice-President Justin “P-Nut” Price will not be among the leadership of Local 947. Over the past 23 years, Vice-President Price has served the members of Local 947 as an Executive Board member, Secretary, and, since 2011, Vice-President. During the recent nomination process, he made the decision to step into a well-deserved “union retirement”—at least from the Executive Board.

P-Nut and I stepped into our respective roles as President and Vice-President during a challenging time, and two unprecedented events shaped our first year in office. In our very first month, the Fire Chief informed us of a potential budget shortfall that threatened to close a ladder company. We navigated this crisis by engaging directly with the community. We attended every public budget hearing across the council districts and distributed flyers detailing how losing the ladder company would compromise public safety. At that time, we lacked a positive relationship with the City Council—some members even openly called for us to be fired for speaking out against the proposed cuts. But we stayed the course. In the end, the ladder company was saved, and the council member who had called for our removal was voted out of office.

Shortly thereafter, tragedy struck. Our friend and fellow firefighter Will Caviness unexpectedly passed away while running the Chicago Marathon. Nothing could have prepared our Local for such a monumental loss, but 947 rallied to support Will’s family in every way possible. It was an incredibly difficult time, and we moved forward by focusing on doing the next right thing. From that tragedy, we developed a template for supporting families in the aftermath of loss—one that continues to guide our efforts to this day. Much of that work, as well as our response to subsequent tragedies, can be attributed to P-Nut’s leadership and compassion.

Since those early days, P-Nut has remained a guiding voice for our Local and beyond. His expertise has been recognized by the IAFF, where he has served as a Peer Support Instructor and contributed to the development of firefighter behavioral health courses delivered across the United States and Canada.

Although P-Nut will no longer serve on our Executive Board, his legacy within Local 947 and the Greensboro Fire Department is immeasurable. He will continue his important work with the IAFF and remains just a phone call away. On behalf of the entire membership, I extend our deepest gratitude to P-Nut for his unwavering dedication, leadership, and friendship over the past two decades. Thank you, brother!

<around our union>

Changes on the Executive Board in 2025

Nominations for all positions on the Executive Board were held at our 3rd quarter union meeting in September. There were no contested elections so all nominations were confirmed by acclamation.

President: Dave Coker

Vice-President: Vinnie Messina

Secretary: Tyler Hoke

Treasurer: Brian Green

Executive Board:

Marcus Cox

Justin Fitzmartin

Jonathan Moore

Bowen Swink

Ricardo Reyes

Local 947 Takes the Lead on Organizing Annual GFD Memorial Service

In October, Local 947 partnered with the GFD to host our annual Memorial Service at firefighter's plot at Green Hill Cemetery. This year marked the 100th anniversary of the event.

Those honored included all GFD and IAFF LODDs as well as this year's personnel: Bobby Straughan, Dewey Kivett, Emmet VanNess Jr, Irvin Latta, Joseph Daniels, and Charlie West.

Greensboro Mayor Nancy Vaughan and Deputy Chief Dwayne Church were among the key note speakers. President Coker served as the program coordinator.



Local 947 Hosts Screening of *Burned: Protecting the Protectors*

In November, Local 947 partnered with the NC Conservation Network, Haw River Keepers, and NC State to host a screening of the powerful documentary film, *Burned: Protecting the Protectors*.

The film follows the battle of a fire wife in Worcester to expose the dangers posed by PFAS chemicals in turnout gear.

A panel discussion following the film was held and Secretary Messina represented Local 947. There were approximately 60 attendees including the Mayor, council members, the City Manager and Assistant Manager, Chief Robinson, and Rep. Branson.

Local 947 used the event to highlight the need for early detection cancer screenings for Greensboro firefighters.

<around our union>



New Member Committee Provides Fresh Perspectives

In 2024, Local 947 reorganized our New Member Committee. The Committee is open to all members who have less than 5 years on the job and serves as a focus group to discuss, debate, and brainstorm on ideas and initiatives around issues of membership engagement.

So far, the Committee has brought forth a number of solid ideas including our new social hour, the *10-7 Coffee Club*.

If you meet the seniority requirements and would like to participate in the New Member Committee, contact Ricardo Reyes

Families Honored at IAFF Fallen Fire Fighters Memorial

In September, members of Local 947 traveled to the annual IAFF Fallen Fire Fighter Memorial in Colorado Springs, CO. This year, Local 947 member Robert Swink's name was enshrined on the granite walls of the memorial alongside other IAFF members who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the execution of their duties.

Additionally, Secretary Vinnie Messina and family made the cross country trip to honor Vinnie's brother, Mauro Messina, a US Air Force veteran and former Statesville firefighter.

Both Robert Swink and Mauro Messina were placed on the wall due to line of duty designation as a result of occupational cancer.



By Dillon Chaney

11 DAYS IN BUNCOMBE COUNTY



My 11 days in Buncombe County—specifically in Fairview, Garren Creek, and Swannanoa—have been some of the most humbling of my life. I was paired with a team of incredible individuals, and together we encountered some of the most resilient people I've ever met. We witnessed devastation up close, sifting through piles of full-size trees, house debris, vehicles ranging from small sedans to full tractor-trailers, shipping containers, dumpsters, and anything else carried away by the water. We walked miles along debris-laden riverbanks, navigated roads that had completely washed out, and saw where the river had carved out a new bed, displacing miles of earth.

Amid the tragedy, loss of property, and even the grief of losing loved ones, the strength and generosity of the community were overwhelming. Despite their own hardships, residents constantly asked if we—rescue teams—had everything we needed. They offered us snacks and water, always prioritizing the well-being of others over themselves. It was a powerful testament to their ability to rally and support one another during such desperate times.

Task Force 6, made up of Greensboro firefighters, sent 46 people—some twice—to western North Carolina starting on September 24th. During our time away from our families, we worked alongside agencies from across the country: dog handlers from California, Nevada, Missouri, Nebraska, and Maryland; Border Patrol from Texas; multiple USAR and water rescue teams from over 28 states;

II DAYS IN BUNCOMBE COUNTY

the Army and National Guard from as far away as Alabama and Kentucky; NC Wildlife; Marine Patrol; and law enforcement from across the state. The connections and friendships we've forged during this mission will forever be tied to this weather event. We shared stories about our families, guilt, sorrow, grief, and sympathy for the region we were there to support.

As I reflect, I ask that you continue to keep the residents of Buncombe County in your prayers. Pray for the families who are broken, for the responders who carry the weight of what they've witnessed, for those still searching for their loved ones, and for the government to provide the resources these cities and towns need to rebuild and thrive again. If there's one thing this experience has taught me, it's that even in the darkest times, goodness shines through. Sometimes, you have to sift through the devastation to find it, but it's always there.

A special thank you to Trinity Baptist Church for housing us and going above and beyond to provide supplies, meals, and so much more. To The Laundry Stop for ensuring responders and the community had clean clothes in record time, and to Shower Up Nashville for providing showers to those in need—your kindness made a world of difference. There are many more who stepped up, and to say we were treated better than we deserved is an understatement. Thank you all.

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<union news>

Local 947 Endorsed Candidate Ray Riffe Elected to Civil Service Board

The Local 947 endorsed candidate for the position representing Greensboro's firefighters on the newly formed Civil Service Board, Ray Riffe, was elected! We would like to thank all the members that voted for Ray!

The Local 947 Executive Board recruited and vetted Ray for the position. Ray, a USMC veteran, brings a wealth of experience in representing public employees to the position and will be a strong voice for fair and equal application of city policies.

Local 947 Implements Family Protection Benefit

Local 947 members voted overwhelmingly to support the move away from AFBA in favor of the Local 947 Family Protection Benefit. The vote was 98% in favor of bringing the benefit in-house.

Treasurer Brian Green will be reporting on the financial health of the fund at Local 947 monthly zooms updates and our quarterly union meetings. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out to Brian Green.



Training Days Coming Back to GSO!

Training Days OTR is coming back to Greensboro! The event will be held at the Carolina Theater on March 10-12, 2025. **Confirmed Speakers include:**

Aaron Fields, Ricky Riley, Sam Hittle, John Salka, Dave LeBlanc, Dena Ali, Brandon Hiller, Richard Ray, Scott Garber, Mike Ciampo, Larry Schultz, Brian Bastinelli, and Todd Szelkowski

Local 947 will be again hosting a raffle for the price of registration as well as serving as a co-host of the event with the GFD.



ENGAGING IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS

Why Political Engagement Matters for Firefighters

As a public employee, every aspect of your pay, benefits, and working conditions is decided by elected officials or those appointed by elected officials. From your first day in rookie school to the day bagpipes are played at your funeral service, these decisions directly impact your career and livelihood.

That's why it's critical for Local 947 to remain actively engaged in local and state level politics. We have the unique opportunity to "elect our bosses" through City Council elections and secure wins at the North Carolina General Assembly (NCGA). By engaging with City Council and NCGA members, we ensure that decision-makers understand the issues that affect firefighters, such as pay, benefits, and workplace safety.

Why a Seat at the Table is Essential

When Local 947 is involved in discussions that affect our members, we can advocate effectively for your interests. When we're absent from those discussions, we risk being "on the menu," meaning could see a reduction in benefits, raises that aren't in line with market value, or even worse case scenarios like potential cuts in staffing. This has happened before, and we are committed to ensuring it doesn't happen again.

Political Diversity in Our Membership

Local 947's membership reflects a broad spectrum of political beliefs. Some members lean right, others left, while many are in the middle—or skeptical of all sides. Your union respects

your right to vote for whoever you choose and to engage politically in a way that aligns with your values.

Local 947's responsibility, however, is to provide you with information about candidates—regardless of their political party—who support the issues that matter most to firefighters: pay, benefits, safety, and workers' rights.

Our Endorsement Philosophy

Local 947's endorsement philosophy is nonpartisan and driven by job-related issues. We don't evaluate candidates based on party affiliation or their stance on issues unrelated to firefighters and worker rights. Instead, we focus solely on topics that affect you at work—compensation, healthcare, staffing, retirement, and employee rights.

We understand that individual members may prioritize different issues when voting, such as the Second Amendment or environmental policies. While union endorsements might not always align with your personal views, our goal is to inform you about candidates who support the issues that directly affect your job and livelihood.

A Decade of Wins Through Political Advocacy

Local 947's engagement in local politics has led to significant wins for firefighters:

- 2014: Achieved four-person ladder staffing for the department.
- 2015: Obtained a holiday stipend for FLSA-exempt employees and secured a pay increase for senior Battalion Chiefs.
- 2017: Won a 7.5% pay raise for public safety personnel.
- 2018: Successfully overturned an ordinance restricting the political freedoms of City employees.
- 2019: Secured a \$600,000 market adjustment for Senior Firefighters and Engineers.



Your PAC Fund: Fire Fighters for Responsible Government

Fire Fighters for Responsible Government (FFRG) is Local 947's Political Action Committee (PAC) Fund.

FFRG is a separate, segregated fund (not union dues!) which Local 947 members voluntarily contribute to.

FFRG funds are used to financially support pro-firefighter candidates and initiatives. Contact a member of the Executive Board to learn how you can support FFRG today!





- 2021: Presumptive cancer coverage for firefighters in NC. Secured an additional \$243K for SrFFs and Eng, bringing control points to 95% and 101% respectively
- 2022: Won significant pay raises for each rank
- 2023: Secured a 4% step plan
- 2023: Won Civil Service Protections through the NC General Assembly
- 2024: Increase in presumptive cancer benefits

About Your Political Action Committee (PAC)

To ensure broader member involvement and to make sure all political points of view are represented in shaping Local 947's political direction, your union established a Political Action Committee (PAC) several years ago. Interested members are always welcome to join and participate in the PAC.

How Endorsements Happen

There are three ways a candidate can obtain an endorsement from Local 947:

- **PAC Recommendation:** Candidates complete a detailed questionnaire and participate in a follow-up interview. The PAC reviews their responses and votes on a recommendation to the Executive Board.
- **Executive Board Action:** While the Executive Board generally relies on PAC recommendations, the Board occasionally endorses candidates with whom Local 947 has a long-standing positive relationship.

- **Membership Vote:** Any member can make a motion to endorse a candidate at a membership meeting.

How You Can Help

- **Stay Engaged:** Reach out to PAC members or the Executive Board with questions or concerns.
- **Join the PAC:** Ensure our PAC reflects the diverse perspectives of our membership.
- **Contribute to the Local 947 Political Action Committee Fund (Fire Fighters for Responsible Government):** If half our members contributed \$5/month, the PAC would have over \$18,000 annually to support firefighter-friendly candidates and initiatives.
- **Vote:** Participate in every election to ensure your voice is heard.

Local 947 is here to support you, advocate for your job-related interests, and keep firefighters' issues front and center in every political discussion.



7th Annual Coats for Kids Program: Keeping Warm, Spreading Hope

Local 947 held our 7th annual Coats for Kids program in October at Cone Elementary. This event, one of the most significant community initiatives organized by Local 947 in partnership with the Greensboro Fire Fighters Charitable Fund, made a meaningful difference in the lives of local children.

This year, the program provided 200 high-quality winter coats to children in grades K-3. These coats are more than just clothing—they represent the care and commitment of Greensboro's firefighters to the communities they serve. With the chilly months ahead, the coats will help ensure that students stay warm and ready to focus on learning, not the cold.

Local 947 members were joined at the event by Mayor Nancy Vaughan, representatives from Fire Administration, and members of the Fire Human Resources team. Their presence underscored the collaborative spirit that makes this initiative possible year after year.

The event attracted significant attention from local media outlets, with coverage by WXII, WFMY, and Fox 8. Their stories helped amplify the program's impact, showcasing the positive relationship between Greensboro's firefighters and the community.

In an inspiring extension of the program's reach, surplus coats were delivered to Banner Elk, NC, to assist children affected by Hurricane Helene. This highlights our union's broader mission: not only to protect lives and property but also to extend a helping hand to those in need, even beyond Greensboro.

The Coats for Kids program exemplifies the power of collective action and generosity. Each year, it strengthens the bond between firefighters and the community, illustrating the compassion and dedication of the men and women of Local 947.
