

Resolution No. 47

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENT: Legislative & Political

Re: Medicare Eligibility at Age 55 for Firefighters and EMS Personnel

1 WHEREAS, firefighters and emergency medical
2 services (EMS) personnel provide essential public
3 safety services and serve as the first line of response
4 during emergencies, disasters, and critical incidents;
5 and

6 WHEREAS, firefighters and EMS personnel
7 perform physically and mentally demanding work
8 under hazardous and stressful conditions throughout
9 their careers; and

10 WHEREAS, firefighters and EMS personnel are
11 routinely exposed to carcinogens, infectious diseases,
12 toxic substances, traumatic incidents, sleep
13 deprivation, psychological stress, and other
14 occupational hazards that can have lifelong impacts
15 on their health and well-being; and

16 WHEREAS, the International Association of Fire
17 Fighters has recognized occupational cancer as a
18 leading cause of line-of-duty deaths among
19 firefighters, and substantial research has
20 demonstrated that firefighters face significantly
21 increased cancer risks due to repeated exposure to
22 toxic combustion byproducts and other hazardous
23 substances encountered in the performance of their
24 duties; and

25 WHEREAS, numerous studies have demonstrated

26 that firefighters and EMS personnel experience
27 elevated rates of occupational cancer, cardiovascular
28 disease, behavioral health challenges, post-traumatic
29 stress injuries, and other service-related illnesses; and

30 WHEREAS, many public safety retirement
31 systems recognize the unique physical and mental
32 demands of firefighting and emergency medical
33 services by permitting retirement after twenty to
34 twenty-five years of service, often well before the
35 traditional retirement age; and

36 WHEREAS, firefighters and EMS personnel who
37 retire after a full public safety career may face a gap
38 of several years between retirement eligibility and
39 Medicare eligibility, leaving many without access to
40 affordable healthcare coverage during a period when
41 occupational illnesses and injuries may emerge or
42 worsen; and

43 WHEREAS, access to affordable healthcare is
44 critical to ensuring that retired firefighters and EMS
45 personnel can receive timely treatment for
46 occupational illnesses and injuries that may not
47 manifest until years after retirement; and

48 WHEREAS, Congress has previously recognized
49 the unique nature of public safety professions
50 through legislation providing enhanced retirement
51 and pension benefits for certain public safety
52 employees; and

53 WHEREAS, establishing Medicare eligibility at
54 age 55 for firefighters and EMS personnel would
55 recognize the extraordinary sacrifices made by these
56 workers and provide a meaningful measure of

57 healthcare security in retirement; therefore be it
58 RESOLVED, That the International Association
59 of Fire Fighters (IAFF) reaffirm its commitment to
60 protecting the health and welfare of active and retired
61 firefighters and EMS personnel; and be it further
62 RESOLVED, That the IAFF actively pursue
63 federal legislation establishing eligibility for
64 Medicare benefits beginning at age 55 for firefighters
65 and EMS personnel who have completed a qualifying
66 public safety career; and be it further
67 RESOLVED, That the IAFF make the enactment
68 of Medicare eligibility at age 55 for firefighters and
69 EMS personnel a legislative priority and advocate for
70 such legislation before Congress, the Executive
71 Branch, and appropriate federal agencies; and be it
72 further
73 RESOLVED, That the IAFF support and
74 collaborate with other public safety organizations
75 pursuing similar healthcare initiatives for career first
76 responders; and be it further
77 RESOLVED, That the IAFF work with labor
78 organizations, retiree organizations, public safety
79 associations, and allied stakeholders to advance
80 federal legislation providing Medicare eligibility at
81 age 55 for firefighters and EMS personnel.

Submitted by: Michigan Professional Fire Fighters Union,
IAFF Local 0431, Royal Oak Professional
Firefighters, IAFF L1164, Livonia, IAFF Local
0421, Lansing & Delhi Township, IAFF Local
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Cost Estimate: **None**

Annual or Perpetual Designation: **N/A**

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

CONVENTION ACTION: