

Funding for SAFER and FIRE Grants

The IAFF supports increased funding for the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) and Assistance to Firefighters (FIRE Act) grant programs and providing \$810 million, evenly divided, for the two programs.

BACKGROUND

The SAFER and FIRE grant programs were created by Congress to help address the significant staffing, equipment, training and health and safety needs of fire departments. SAFER provides funding to help pay the costs associated with hiring personnel to maintain safe staffing levels, while FIRE Act grants fund equipment, training and other fire department needs.

The importance of adequate fire department staffing has been researched and is well-documented in independent studies. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), the consensus standards-making body of the fire service, and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), have both promulgated standards for the minimum number of fire fighters needed to respond safely and effectively to emergencies. Far too few jurisdictions meet these minimum safe staffing levels.

Similarly, the FIRE Act grant program allows fire departments to purchase equipment and

receive training that they would not otherwise afford. The equipment and training funded by the FIRE Act grant program help fire fighters do their jobs safely and effectively by improving fire department operations and protecting the health and safety those on the frontlines.

For Fiscal Year 2020, SAFER and FIRE Act grants were funded at \$710 million - \$355 million each. Although the programs have received small funding increases in recent years, funding remains down from an historic high of \$810 million. The president's budget for Fiscal Year 2021 cuts funding for the two programs, proposing SAFER and FIRE grants receive \$688.688 million or \$344,344 million each.

Unfortunately, as costs to adequately staff and equip fire departments continue to rise, fire departments are still facing significant staffing shortages. Such shortages not only threaten fire fighter safety, they undermine emergency response capabilities and pose significant threats to public safety and local preparedness.

LEGISLATION

Funding for SAFER and FIRE Act grant programs for the upcoming fiscal year will be addressed as part of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2021.

The House and Senate Appropriations Subcommittees on Homeland Security will consider the Fiscal Year 2021 appropriations bills in the spring of 2020.