



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS

## **NEWS RELEASE**

1750 New York Ave. NW, Washington, D.C. 20006

[www.iaff.org](http://www.iaff.org)

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Contact: Doug Stern  
[dstern@iaff.org](mailto:dstern@iaff.org); (513) 919-4311

## **HEROES Act Will Help Keep Communities Safe**

*Fire fighters urge Congress to move quickly to pass HEROES Act to protect them and shore up public safety*

WASHINGTON, DC – With state and local governments straining under the weight of COVID-19, public safety budgets are under direct threat, which may result in fewer fire fighters, paramedics and EMTs to keep communities safe.

The International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) and the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) are urging Congress to pass the Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions Act, or HEROES Act. The HEROES Act provides direct assistance to state and local governments, protects critical public safety radio spectrum, funds essential grants for keeping fire fighters on fire trucks and provides resources for families of first responders who have died due to occupational exposures to COVID-19.

“Emergency responders conducting countless COVID-19 emergency runs now face the prospect of losing their jobs, leaving their communities less safe,” said IAFF General President Harold Schaitberger. “We urge Congress to move swiftly to pass this essential bill to strengthen public safety. Fire fighters, paramedics and EMTs are putting their lives on the line to keep us all safe; they deserve to know that our elected representatives have their backs.”

Chief Gary Ludwig, IAFC President and Chairman of the Board agreed, “As warriors at the tip of the spear in this fight against COVID-19, fire fighters are struggling to get the supplies that they need. Meanwhile, the budget cuts caused by the economic slowdown may layoff approximately 30,000 fire fighters. We ask our supporters in Congress to be heroes and pass this critical legislation.”

The HEROES Act helps fire departments in several important ways, including:

- Providing \$500 billion in direct assistance to state governments and \$375 billion to local governments to help mitigate the fiscal impact of the pandemic.
- Authorizes \$1 billion in supplemental funding for the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant program to help maintain fire fighter staffing and the Assistance for Firefighters (AFG) grant program to provide personal protective equipment (PPE), mental health assistance and training for fire fighters.
- Increases the federal share for reimbursement under the Disaster Relief Fund to 100 percent to assist cash-strapped state and local governments.
- Protects critical public safety spectrum from auction in the T-Band (470-512 MHz).

The HEROES Act also includes provisions to protect the health and safety of fire fighters and other frontline responders:

- Extends emergency sick and emergency leave to first responders.
- Creates a presumption for COVID-19 under the Public Safety Officers Benefit (PSOB) program so families of fire fighters who die in the line of duty from COVID-19 are guaranteed federal benefits.
- Provides hazard pay for fire fighters and other frontline workers.
- Establishes a COVID-19 presumption under federal workers' compensation to ensure federal fire fighters who become ill from COVID-19 receive necessary benefits.

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