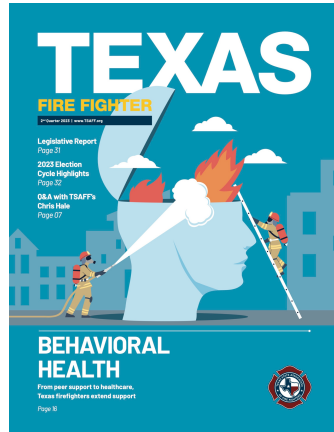




TEXAS STATE ASSOCIATION of FIRE FIGHTERS

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2023 IAFF Media Awards Submission:
Best Newsletter or Magazine (1,000+ Circulation)

TEXAS FIRE FIGHTER

Texas State Association of Fire Fighters
John Riddle, Brandon Day, Erin Powers

TSAFF represents more than 18,700 members in IAFF-affiliate locals in 194 Texas communities.

For the past six years through three biennial conventions, TSAFF members have increasingly invested in our political and communications programs – including education/workshops, legislative resources, social media channels, etc.

A focus of our communications improvements has been our publication, TEXAS FIRE FIGHTER, which now features longer-format articles and profiles on fire service leadership, along with district reports and other standing items.

In 2023, renewed member interest in TEXAS FIRE FIGHTER prompted us to resume printing the publication after several years of statewide distribution of a digital-only version. The most recent edition was mailed to nearly 900 TSAFF-affiliate fire stations in the state.

The last two issues of TEXAS FIRE FIGHTER focused on EMS and behavioral health issues in Texas with lengthy Q&A-format roundtables with state firefighter leaders with subject matter

expertise and experience. The next edition, in January 2024, will feature health and safety issues. A consistent goal of the publication is to clearly show what the TSAFF, the IAFF and the members' local leadership are doing for them.

Through growing advertising support, TEXAS FIRE FIGHTER will soon be cost-neutral or moderately profitable. Our current advertisers include the TSAFF partners such as Firefighters First Credit Union and the IAFF Financial Corporation.

Attached for your review are PDFs of the 3Q 2022 and 2Q 2023 issues of TEXAS FIRE FIGHTER.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this submission.

John Riddle
President
September 28, 2023

TEXAS

FIRE FIGHTER

2nd Quarter 2023 | www.TSAFF.org

Legislative Report

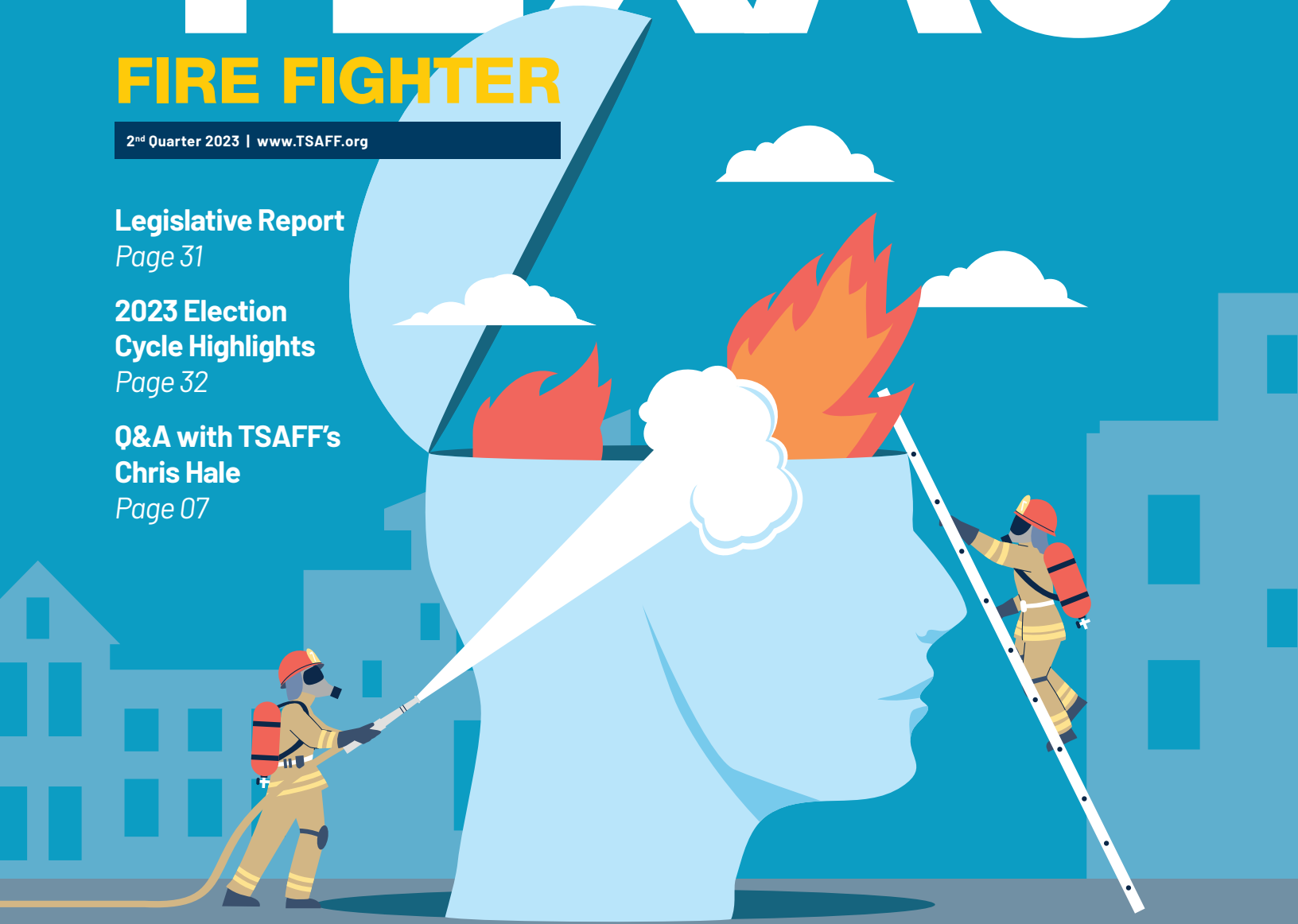
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BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

From peer support to healthcare,
Texas firefighters extend support

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The Texas Fire Fighter Magazine

Editor - Brandon Day

Assistant Editor - Cindy Gonzales

Communications Director - Erin Powers

Produced by:

Texas State Association of Fire Fighters

1106 Lavaca Street, Suite 100

Austin, Texas 78701

(512) 326-5050



FireOps: The Woodlands L-3846 recently hosted elected officials, staff and guests for an introduction to the fire service. Photo: Erin Powers.



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Special Appointments

TLFFRA Liaison - Albert Chapa

TMRS Liaison - Jaime Reyes

District Legislative Agents - Lloyd Sandefer, Brad McCutcheon,

Mike Silva, Jack Todd, Jonathan Wilson, Joaquin Criner

District Field Service Representatives - Matthew Baker,

Colin Batchelor, Leo Mendoza, Trey Wells, Scott Robertson

Health and Safety Committee - James Younger (chair),

Scott Robertson, Leo Mendoza, Daniel Buford, Chris Conner,

Luke Manion

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Peer support and behavioral health resources for members



Legislative Report

Firefighters gain ground at capitol

Texas Fire Fighter | Qtr 2, 2023

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From the President

Making Progress – With More Work to Do

President
John Riddle

With the regular session of the 88th Texas Legislature done, your TSAFF executive board, staff and Texas firefighter leaders from our 193 locals are assessing where we've been, where we are, and where we need to go. Overall, I'm encouraged despite the political chaos we continue to see in Austin this year. I know so many of you have worked at the state capitol – and at home – to ensure that we defend or improve upon the rights and benefits that our members have earned and deserve.

The legislation that TSAFF members achieved this year is detailed elsewhere in this issue, but please know that I believe we have the absolute best legislative team in Austin. Led by Glenn Deshields and Chase Fruge, along with our district legislative agents and others, our team represented Texas firefighters well.

This issue of TEXAS FIREFIGHTER focuses on behavioral health. The critical aspect of our members's health remains a top priority for the TSAFF and we continue to make sure that our members have the help that they need not only when we face crises but also in how we can help prevent them. You should find interesting the cover-story roundtable discussion of what's happening around the state in this important area. Consider this: Every year since 2014, the suicide rate among firefighters has surpassed all other line of duty deaths combined. This is a statistic that we can – and must – improve upon. I'm hopeful that the culture in the fire service is changing because of Texas dedicated firefighter leaders and the hundreds who have trained to help their brothers and sisters in need.

In 2017, during the Hurricane Harvey relief and recovery, I had the opportunity to witness the extraordinary work of the IAFF Peer

Support team. I saw firsthand the benefits that our members received from their work. It was also during this time that I realized that there was more that the TSAFF could and should be doing. One of those realizations was that, while they may not be as widespread or noticeable, the everyday incidents that you deal with and see on a daily basis can be just as traumatic as the large-scale incidents.

While our challenges in this area may not always involve hundreds of our members at a time – and generally do not – we cannot allow even one member to go without the support they need. After Hurricane Harvey hit the Gulf

“We cannot allow even one member to go without the support they need.”

Coast in 2017, we went to work to establish the TSAFF Peer Support team. This team is modeled after the IAFF program and utilizes IAFF-trained peer supporters. While the IAFF will provide peer support for large scale incidents, the TSAFF team has been deployed when locals have smaller-scale incidents that may involve just their department or a single company or even a single member. I admire the work I have seen our team do. I encourage you to better understand the resources we have available. If your local or one of your members may need peer support assistance, please reach out to your District VP, our 16 peer support leaders around the state, or visit tsaff.org/peer-support.



John Riddle
President

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Along with deployment of our peer support team, we continue to work on legislative solutions too. For example, during the 2017 legislative session, the TSAFF passed HB 1983 which made post-traumatic stress a compensable injury under the workers compensation system. This bill, however, required a PTSD diagnosis be based on a single incident. We know that the things you see on the job daily throughout the course of your career can and do have a cumulative effect on your mental wellbeing. So, in the 2019 legislative session, we passed HB 2143 which allows a PTSD diagnosis based on that cumulative effect. And we have continued to work toward improving the system where we can.

So, as you read this issue, please remain confident that the TSAFF will continue to help look for answers to important behavioral health questions. I also hope this issue will encourage you to explore your own behavioral health needs and those of our brothers and sisters. And please just know that there is help available 24/7 through the IAFF and the TSAFF. No matter what – we are never alone in our troubles, and confidential, proven help is only a phone call away.

Stay safe and take care of each other.

From the Editor / Secretary-Treasurer

Should Your Local Purchase Accounting Software?

Secretary/Treasurer and Editor of the Texas Fire Fighter
Brandon Day

For the past five years, we have presented Secretary/Treasurer training workshops for members around the state. These workshops have been very well received, based on strong survey results, and they have provided tools our secretary/treasurers need to be more efficient. We continue to improve the workshops as we go too. I'm also proud that the IAFF included much of our workshop program at the most recent ALTS meeting.

One of the questions I get asked frequently is: Should a local purchase accounting software? There is no blanket answer for all locals. The more complicated answer lies with several questions or issues your local should consider, including:

- How much is your annual budget?
- How many bank accounts do you have?
- Do you also have a 501 c(3) in addition to your 501 c(5)?
- Do you have extra income outside of dues?

Let's start with the first question: How much is your annual budget? In years past, a local often purchased QuickBooks desktop for \$200 to \$300 and it would last for years. More recently, the QuickBooks publisher has pushed users to Quickbooks Online or pay \$800 per year for the desktop version. This has quickly grown into a major expense for locals. The cheapest version of QuickBooks Online costs about \$30 per month. Currently in the TSAFF, there are 110 locals with 50 members or less. If we consider a local with 50 members with a dues structure of \$50 per month, they are left with less than \$14,000 available in the budget after paying affiliate dues. While that seems plenty to afford QuickBooks, the

practical reality is that those funds often are needed elsewhere.

Regarding the second question on bank accounts, many locals only have one or two bank accounts. Typically with those locals, there isn't a lot of money moving in and out of those accounts. With lower traffic and few bank accounts, tracking your funds can be done fairly easily using Excel or Google Sheets at no cost. If your local has several monthly transactions and several bank accounts, then you should take a look at using QuickBooks or other software to stay organized.

Next are the locals that have 501 c(3) requirements besides their 501 c(5) one. This situation creates a necessary duplication of



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efforts. Each one of these entities requires its own EIN, which in turn requires them to have separate books. This means if you choose to

↓ TSAFF Secretary/Treasurer workshops provide detailed training with QuickBooks and tips for local financial operations.



use software like Quickbooks, you will have to pay for a second subscription if you are using the online version. The good news there is: You can visit www.techsoup.com and sign up your 501 c(3) for discounts. The current discounted rate for the online is \$75 per year. Still, this creates an added expense and you should consider the cost versus the benefits.

Another question to answer relates to your income sources. If you are doing several fundraisers and wanting to ensure the money is kept separate, it will be easier using some kind

of software or accounting system. The same is true if your local has other revenue streams. If you have a lot of sales and need to pay sales tax, it will be easier if you have a system in place.

As you can see there is a lot that goes into this decision. We also have an option for free use through the TSAFF but it is limited and designed for one or two checking accounts and less traffic. It is more suited for the locals that file 990N (less than \$50,000 in gross annual receipts).

Looking across our state, I'm impressed with how many locals are improving the accounting procedures. For anyone needing help, friendly advice from our staff or a nearby local is available. If you are unsure or have questions about software or other secretary/treasurer issues, please call or email anytime, and we can discuss what is right for your local. And if you would like to host or schedule a TSAFF secretary/treasurer workshop in your area, please contact me or your DVP.



Preserve the Past

Please help ensure that the extraordinary work of TSAFF firefighters is included in our history.

We seek recent and historical fire and EMS incident photos and video for display at TSAFF events and for archives. We will ensure original materials are handled carefully, credited if used, and returned. An FTP link to conveniently upload videos and photos is available. If you can help or have questions, please contact us at your convenience.

Photo Credit: Erin Powers



Q&A with TSAFF's Chris Hale

TEXAS FIRE FIGHTER will periodically profile TSAFF officers, board members, staff appointees, and members. This issue features Chris Hale, our chaplain.



↑ Chris Hale, TSAFF chaplain

W

What's your background?

I grew up in Tahlequah, a small town in northeastern Oklahoma, working on our family's dairy farm and friends' ranches. After graduation, I attended Oklahoma Christian University and transferred to Northeastern State. I graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in criminal justice. While at Northeastern and headed for law school, I worked for Judge Bill Bliss, the chief district judge of the five-county 15th Judicial District of Oklahoma, as a law clerk and bailiff for 10 years. During that time with the court system, I became keenly aware of the importance and need for justice within

society. The law, though, is not set up to meet all of our needs. The longer I was in this position, the more I felt the unmet need of those coming to court. I began thinking that ministry would be a way to meet their deeper needs.

With this thought rolling around in my head, I was introduced to a man who became a friend and mentor. He completely changed my idea that ministry was either preaching or moving to another country as a missionary. My mentor has long since passed away, but his influence on my life is profound. I want to share a short synopsis of my mentor's life with you and see what you think.

Growing up in the mountains in the 1940s, he knew how to live off the land and feed his family by the time he was 10 years old... so the adults could make moonshine. One day, the feds showed up, killing his entire family. He was the only survivor. For the next few years, he survived pretty much on his own in the mountains, too scared to venture into town.

The day he did venture into town with his shotgun on his shoulder (the way he always carried it), he saw an emblem on a door that had been on the fed's car that tragic day. Trying to put the pieces together, he opened the door and walked in. Everyone moved away in fear, gave him money, and told him to leave. He had walked into a bank with a gun on his shoulder. For many years after that, by himself, he would rob one bank a year. The year he invited others into his criminal activity was the year he was caught and sentenced to prison.

During my friend's time in the mountains, his momma had taught him to read well. While my friend was in prison, he could hear a young boy a few cells down trying to read the Bible. The reading difficulty the boy was having irritated my friend. So, he had the guards move the boy into his cell. My friend planned to read to the boy so he wouldn't have to listen to the boy read. For the first time in his life, he read the Bible cover to cover. My friend, who had never gone to church and only witnessed people saying they were Christians but lived just like everyone else, became enamored with what the Bible said. He began telling his friends in prison about what he was reading, and they started reading the Bible. He wrote letters to several different churches to get their take on what Bible passages meant and his Bible study group, just using the Bible, would debate the answers from the church leaders. By the time he was released, he had taught hundreds of people about the Bible. He eventually became a prison minister and pastored a church.

One of the men my friend taught in prison was my wife's uncle. The first Sunday after her uncle was released from prison, we went to church with him – at my friend's church. It was the first time in my life I witnessed what the children's song says – Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world, red and yellow, black and white they are precious in his sight – in the church building. There were rich folks, poor folks, young working families, prostitutes, ex-prisoners, drug addicts and widows



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listening intently to what my soon-to-be friend and mentor was preaching. They listened intently because he knew each of them by name. He knew their stories & they knew his passion of sharing the help and hope he found in God's word. That Sunday changed my life.

Later on, my wife, Kelliann, and I quit our government jobs, went to missions training, traveled the world doing humanitarian work, bought a home in the inner city of St. Louis, planted a church in our neighborhood, began our family, and watched God work in the lives of the most broken people of our society. I thought God sent us there to help others, but I realized God sent me there to change me. Our time in St. Louis was eye-opening, wonderful, and challenging. After 10 years of living and working in the inner city, I decided to continue my graduate education in theology. Abilene Christian accepted me into the Master of Divinity program, so in 2003, we moved to Abilene. Every season readies us for the next.

Tell us about your career as a fire chaplain.

The state district judge I worked for was also a firefighter. Working with him for all those years, I saw and supported the fire service in our rural area. Since that first experience with the fire service, three pivotal events shaped my life and, ultimately, chaplaincy. The first was the Oklahoma City bombing incident, where I worked as a Red Cross chaplain with family members, the second was a devastating multi-casualty fire killing six children in our St. Louis Hyde Park neighborhood, and the third was 9/11, where I worked as a Red Cross chaplain with family members, FBI agents, police, and firefighters. Each of these experiences drew me toward helping and serving those who serve.

While in seminary, I realized I wanted to work with the fire service. I reached out to Alan Rogers, the chaplain for the Abilene Fire Department at the time and he became my AFD mentor. It wasn't long after that he was deployed, and I became the AFD chaplain. In 2009, I was honored that TSAFF chaplain Denny Burris selected me to follow him as TSAFF chaplain.

My experiences before becoming the AFD and TSAFF chaplain have made my time with you rich. I cannot even begin to express how humbled and honored I am to walk with our

members during life-changing events like marriages, new babies, promotions, and tragic and heartbreaking circumstances, such as when our firefighters die in the line of duty.

I have thoroughly enjoyed working with Abilene L-1044, the executive board, committees, and with so many of you on different projects in Abilene and throughout the state. Some projects that we've worked on together have been Christmas for Abilene families, LODD protocols and benefits, cancer and benevolent relief.

At Dyess Air Force base here in Abilene, I have been an honorary commander of the C-130J Super Hercules, the screaming eagles, 40th Airlift squadron. I co-developed and implemented the P-4 project, a partnership of area chaplains with the Dyess chaplains. Every two years Dyess Air Force Base undergoes a unit effectiveness inspection conducted by the Inspector General. One of the strengths mentioned specifically in the Inspector General's report was the P-4 Chaplain Initiative. We partnered together for professional development, training, and continuing contingency operations. The results of this partnership increased efficiency in incident notification, an on-going training schedule, and increased religious accommodation of pastoral care skills. P-4 chaplains have responded together and worked with a number of crisis events.

Working with our TSAFF members on the peer support project has been a highlight of my career. We are currently working on a statewide network of trained peers to be there for each other. We are also working with peers in Oklahoma to help develop an Oklahoma peer support network.

Now that you're semi-retired, what are your interests outside the fire service?

I still serve my home local and the TSAFF as chaplain. As I have a little more time, I am playing music and beginning to work on our old homeplace and ranch in Tahlequah.

What training, competency/skills, or character traits are required are found in a good service chaplain?

Having a heart that is called to fire service ministry is the first step for someone interested in fire service chaplaincy. Chaplains must

know who they are; their strengths and their limitations, so personal reflection is vital. As far as training goes, trauma-informed training, grief counseling, how to provide spiritual care during crisis events, and specific fire chaplain training and certification are critical. An understanding of the way trauma affects individuals is paramount as we serve our firefighters and communities to the best of our ability. A post-graduate theology degree is required for some departments, like the military. I understand that, as I obtained a Master of Divinity degree in order to chaplain. However, some chaplains serve their departments in incredible ways without advanced theological/ministry degrees. Each department needs to choose a chaplain that "fits." Most important is the chaplain's calling to serve others and be available for their locals, their departments, our members, and their families.

First, I'd like to say character traits of chaplains does not include perfection. Character traits of chaplains does include someone striving to serve and honor God in ministry. Being approachable and genuine with people everywhere they go, not just in public, matters greatly. Listening, being honest and real, even-tempered, and slow to speak are imperatives. Being ready and willing at a moment's notice to stand and support our firefighters who make a choice every day to run into harm's way is the honor of every firefighter chaplain.

Each department is different, and as I get older, I realize the truth in the saying, "The only constant is change." Being a chaplain requires that you learn as you go from people, events, and others' experiences. There is no other way to serve firefighters than to meet them where they and their families are. Chaplains are a source of encouragement and a shoulder to lean on. To do this work well, we must understand that everyone is different and that everyone's needs, and spiritual paths are different. We must believe our personal path is not something to be pushed on anyone. We all come with bags packed full of life. Chaplains are called on to help unpack some of those bags to lighten the burdens of our firefighters and their families.

The FDNY chaplain, Father Mychal Judge, lost his life helping those stranded in the World Trade Center buildings on 9/11. His daily prayer

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is one I believe all chaplains should consider and I lean into often: “Lord, take me where You want me to go, Let me meet who You want me to meet, Tell me what You want me to say, And keep me out of Your way.”

How would you describe your style as chaplain?

Whatever people say my style is, it comes from my belief that we are peers, we are all in this together at the same level. I'd say my style is to be true to my core values, caring, non-judgmental, and patient. We are all broken vessels, helping each other on our journey through life. I try to follow the words of St. Francis, who is said to have advised, “Preach the gospel at all times, and if necessary, use words.”

What kinds of notable challenges have you faced working with affected firefighters through the years?

I think dealing with children who have been victims, and sometimes casualties is always the most challenging. Serving families and firefighters trying to comprehend the how's and why's of young lives being forever changed or lost is difficult for everyone involved. It is in these difficult moments that we come face to face with questions that will not have adequate answers here on earth.

The mass casualty events I've mentioned, can be overwhelming because of the sheer size and magnitude of the need of those affected by the event and the firefighters serving during the event. My mantra is, “I am one of many people, and I don't have the power to fix anything, but I do have the strength to walk with them.”

Witnessing the events of 9/11 unfold on TV, my wife and I knew where I needed to be. I left with two friends from St. Louis and was in New York on 9/13. We were among the first to be let through the Lincoln Tunnel when it reopened. It was surreal. I had a few jobs but mainly worked as a chaplain at family centers, the first located in the 69th Regiment Armory on Lexington Avenue and then at Pier 94 in the NYC harbor through December 2011. I worked with families, firefighters, FBI agents, police, and others who came to serve the families and support personnel. We were all trying to make sense of the events surrounding 9/11.

Hundreds of people, families, friends, those in and out of uniform, and the public were stricken with a grief that cannot be explained. This multitude of people just milled around in the family center in the armory and on Pier 94 hoping for any news of lost loved ones. In that space, we all had the same questions and at the same time were witness to an outpouring of grief, love, care, and patriotism. I watched America come together.

As I was leaving New York that December more than 20 years ago now, I walked for the last time through the family center. On the other side of this enormous building, with hundreds of people between us, my eyes met another person's. I had seen so many folks during my time in New York, but while this person seemed familiar, I couldn't place him. I could tell he was purposefully coming toward me as if he knew me. When we met, he said, “You don't remember me do you?” I apologized and said I did not. He said, “My name is Gary Woodbridge. You were there for me when I lost my wife, Ronota Newberry-Woodbridge, in the Oklahoma City Murrah building bombing. You were my chaplain.” Shocked that we even saw each other, we stood in the middle of all those people, hugged and talked for some time. Gary came to New York because he knew pain like this all too well and wanted to help these families. He came to New York knowing he “was one of many people and didn't have the power to fix anything, but he did have the strength to walk with them.”

I've often thought about that moment. Seeing Gary was a crystal-clear moment when I knew I was where God intended me to be. Serving with the AFD and the TSAFF is crystal clear too. I know this is where God intended me to be.

Considering your constant service to others, what carries you through hard times?

I remember a chief chaplain at a mass casualty event debriefing my team of chaplains. He told us that those who do this work would be scarred somehow. He didn't mean it negatively but in a way that reminded us that we wouldn't forget the emotional impact of events like these.

Many things have carried me through hard times. Chaplaincy is a 24/7 endeavor pulling me from dinners, travel, vacations, holidays,

church, ball games, etc. My supportive wife, Kelliann, and our boys, Rory and Carrick, have been priceless. My training and education have provided a solid foundation. The constant, though, is leaning into my faith knowing God ultimately has control even when the outcome is not good. I can't imagine doing this without great mentors like my friend I spoke about earlier, Chaplain Denny Burris, and the late Dr. Charles Siburt. Spending time in prayer and being vulnerable about my faults, struggles and flaws, I ask God to use the strong and the weak places in me. I have no doubt our vulnerability can help others on their journey, and I pray God uses mine. I think about this passage from I Corinthians 12:9: My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.

As a person of Christian faith, how do you approach supporting firefighters of other religions or who are agnostic or atheist?

I have many close friends all over the world who are agnostics, atheists, and members of other faith traditions. The key for me is consistency. Finding a path to walk with each person in good times and bad is what I am called to do. Appreciating everyone as an individual created in the image of the Creator makes labels like these non-issues. I try to listen carefully to what others are saying to hear what may be under the surface. The path I've chosen is following Christ who loves, listens, and is present. Following Christ compels me to be consistent with my love and care for everyone. I try to meet people where they are, with no judgment or preconceived notions of where their path has been or where it might be going.

As a strong advocate for firefighter peer support programs, you have helped lead change in Texas. Tell us about that.

Helping people is part of the ministry calling. Serving those who serve and understanding the stress people feel coming from every angle – home, work, kids, etc. is what fire chaplains do. If we can relieve that stress in some brief moment, I believe people can be restored and renewed to fight another day. TSAFF President John Riddle and I have been discussing this issue for many years. After I attended my peer support training class, it dawned on me that peer support is another form of ministry.

Peer support meets people where they are and walks with them as they get the needed help for themselves and their families. Peer support provides proactive resources and tools for coping before, during, and after crises. Peer support is practical ministry without the overt spiritual emphasis.

During our Hurricane Harvey response in 2017, I met Dr. Suzy Gulliver, a brilliant psychologist widely respected in the mental and behavioral health fields for her focus on veterans and first responders. During that time, I watched how peer support took practical action following a large-scale event. I watched teams of firefighters from all over the U.S. provide for the folks impacted by the hurricane with physical resources and mental health assistance. These teams of firefighters offered support through referrals, information, and discussion. I am convinced these moments between firefighters provided hope and the tools needed for tangible help.

After the Harvey response, Dr. Gulliver and I began conversations which turned into weekly meetings discussing how to build a network of peers that spanned our great state. Our vision was and still is for peer support to be there for others in real-time, supporting fellow firefighters before a crisis begins by providing proactive resources and also through a crisis event. Our vision is now a reality. The IAFF peer teams deploy for large-scale events and when a large department is affected, such as Hurricane Harvey and the mass shooting in El Paso. Our Texas peer support team responds to events that provide help across the state and don't require as many resources as a large-scale event. The TSAFF response to a crisis can trigger a medium-size deployment. Typically, though, peer support members volunteer to train to be available in the event another firefighter has a crisis in their department, another department, or someone most anywhere in the state.

About two years ago, Dr. Gulliver and I began monthly Zoom calls with the peer team leaders. During these meetings, Dr. Gulliver provides a teaching block for the team leads to use as proactive resources for their peer support team and our members. TSAFF trustee Bill Crews from Garland L-1293 has obtained his IAFF teaching credentials for peer support

and leads in-person and virtual classes. Bill is a key resource and team member providing training and leading operations on IAFF and TSAFF deployments.

We are truly fortunate to have our TSAFF leadership on board. Our TSAFF leadership knows the importance of peer support for the mental and behavioral health of our members. Our leadership wants to break the stigma of getting help – they want to help avert tragedy.

Our members across the state have seen the importance of peer support and have volunteered to be peer support team members. New teams are forming and if you are interested in becoming a peer support team member or know of someone who could use peer support, don't hesitate to contact me and I'll get you connected to the right peer support team.

What encourages you today about the fire service today?

The fire service's youth, innovation, and diversity give me great encouragement and hope. The creativity that comes with integrating new and experienced firefighters continually produces outstanding department and association leadership. Improvements in technology, tactical insight, and continuing research on how to support resiliency and how to assess mental and behavioral health will push our great organization forward into the future. Always remember: The only constant is change.

From the perspective of a chaplain, what do you recommend to further strengthen the fire service?

Continue building healthy relationships. Healthy relationships can make the space for a crisis to be averted. Knowing each other and having honest, thoughtful conversations can save careers, and lives, and heal families.

Peer support is an essential component of the future. Instead of having one chaplain, with peer support any number of fire fighters can be trained in the art of listening, providing resources, and being there for fellow firefighters when times are difficult.

We must continue to break existing stigmas that hinder people from seeking help. The quicker people get the help they need, the better they can be to serve their departments

and their families and community – whether that's addiction, relationship issues, or mental health issues.

We are making headway, but we must continue pressing forward. I am thankful President Riddle sees the importance of mental health awareness, overcoming the stigma, and the need for peer support. His leadership and support along with our eboard and leadership at our locals are moving peer support forward.

Anything else you would like to add?

Our members are a constant support. Great teamwork has carried the TSAFF chaplaincy. There is no way to express my thankfulness adequately to my chaplain mentors, Denny Burris and the late Ed Stauffer, our past and present state leaders, the late Guy Turner and the late Mike Higgins, Bob York, and J.R. Sullivan. I am grateful to President Riddle, Secretary-Treasurer Brandon Day, our district vice presidents, and IAFF 11th District VP Sandy McGhee for all their support for chaplaincy and peer support through the years. I am also thankful for our state association staff who keep me informed and encouraged – Rafael Torres, Liz Wright, Erin Powers, Glenn Deshields, Cindy Gonzales and Chase Fruge.

None of this would have been possible without my home local in Abilene. They taught me about chaplaincy, mentored me, and are lifelong friends. Jimmy Hall, Jess Madison, and so many others have stood by me during my time with the AFD and the TSAFF. I am so thankful to each of the peer leaders and teams around the state who provide day-to-day support for their departments, other teams, and other departments. I'm grateful to have Dr. Gulliver as a co-leader for the peer support project and a friend. She graciously provides education for peer support leaders and clinical support through tele mental health for all our members. We are blessed to have Bill Crews teach for the IAFF peer support training and provide deployment leadership. Many others have seen the need and stepped up all across our great state of Texas by being available to their fellow firefighters – I am forever grateful.

There is no way to list all of you for whom I am deeply grateful. The list is long. I am thankful for everyone who has encouraged me, walked with me, and supported me.

Who you decide to work with matters.

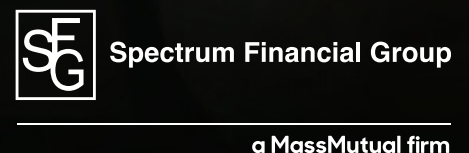
In your line of duty, you often have to make a quick decision. We'd like to give you the opportunity to decide who you work with when it comes to planning for your financial future.

Capital Strategies and Spectrum Financial Group, both Mass Mutual Firms, and your IAFF Financial Corporation are working together to bring members and their family's financial strategies to assist in making timely decisions at each stage in life. We will consider your entire financial picture, from your current needs to future ones, as well as what you hope to achieve before we begin to help you.

Through our fellow MassMutual offices located nationally, we will go to great lengths to deliver the personalized attention and accessibility you deserve. We believe that a financial strategy is about providing you with guidance, insight, and results.

We are looking forward to working with IAFF members soon!

The IAFF-FC has established an agreement with MML Investors Services, LLC (MMLIS). The IAFF-FC is not a client of MMLIS, but does endorse MMLIS and its representatives to offer IAFF members financial wellness, information, products, and services. The IAFF-FC is compensated for its endorsement and will receive 20% of any gross commission or fee resulting from an IAFF member's purchase of insurance, investments, or investment advisory services through MMLIS or its representatives. As a result, the IAFF-FC has an incentive to endorse MMLIS and its representatives. The IAFF-FC intends to use a portion of earned commissions or fees to further the IAFF behavioral health and wellness program offerings. Securities products and investment advisory services are offered through representatives of MML Investors Services, LLC (MMLIS), Member SIPC® and a Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Company (MassMutual) subsidiary, 1295 State Street, Springfield, MA 01111.



TSAFF Trustee Audit Report

Here's a report from Michael Glynn, Chair of the TSAFF Board of Trustees:



Your TSAFF Trustees met with Secretary-Treasurer Brandon Day and his assistant Liz Wright during Fall 2022 for our annual audit of the financial records of our state association. While our work continues throughout the year as we are provided updates to account reconciliations and transactions in the various bank accounts, when we gather in person for our audit, we can review account statements, expense vouchers and their relevant receipts and invoices, and discuss any potential recommendations we deem appropriate to provide to President Riddle and the Board.

Thankfully, this past audit went very smoothly, and your trustees found no significant issues or concerns with the actions taken by our TSAFF Board or in the way our Secretary-Treasurer has managed our various accounts. These include our TSAFF Dues, TAFPAC, Education Fund/Independent Expenditures (Super PAC), and Emergency Disaster Fund (EDF) accounts. All three trustees agreed that there were no findings of any misuse

or misappropriation of any funds. In addition, all expenditures were in accordance with budget guidelines, Board votes, and/or convention actions with the exception a couple of minor infractions made by board members. All political expenditures were approved by the President or the Board as appropriate.

The following are the recommendations from our 2022 audit:

1. Maintain a list of all elected officials taken to a facility or location that offers group or club memberships.
2. Reminder to submit clean receipts without charges to the room; hotel room and tax only. Also, provide airline receipts with the itinerary and fare calculation in the main cabin included. The TSAFF does not reimburse anyone for upgrades for rooms or seat assignments.
3. While this has been addressed, it is worth making sure everyone is aware of the needed practice. If the TSAFF is sharing in the cost of a fundraiser whereby we will be reimbursed by other individuals or organizations a list of those names needs to be submitted to Liz so she can create an invoice in our bookkeeping software.
4. Liz will send budget report updates to Legislative Director Glenn Deshields, especially during the legislative session.
5. Discussion with our legislative team regarding what meals and entertainment should be reimbursed from the legislative line.
6. Through the end of this budget, provide visitation funds to the elected board members. The Board acted by amending the recommendation to provide one-time funding for the remainder of this budget year of \$3,000 to the President and Secretary-Treasurer and \$2,000 to each of the 6 District Vice Presidents. These available funds are the result of salary savings and are intended to allow board members the opportunity to meet with members of other locals in their respective districts.

Recommendations for your Local's Audit

In accordance with the IAFF's Constitution and By-Laws each local union needs to be conducting their own audit each year. Article XIII, Section 9. Audits and Financial Reports states the following:

"All local unions shall an independent inspection of all of their books and accounts performed annually. This inspection may be accomplished internally or externally in accordance with the local's constitution and by-laws. A financial report of this inspection, on a form as provided by the General Secretary-Treasurer's office, shall be prepared, signed and forwarded each year to the General Secretary-Treasurer within 180 days of the close of the local's fiscal year.

Local union books and accounts are subject to audit at any time by the General Secretary-Treasurer as provided by Section 2 of Article VI, and he/she shall have full access to all financial records and membership lists of local unions."

It is important to have trustees elected by your members that are separate from the officers of your local union's board. These members may also perform functions that benefit the membership in various ways such as disciplinary representation, political activities, or serving on committees as members or chairs. When it comes time to perform their audits, it is vital to the integrity of your local union that they can function independently and without being influenced by other members to review the financial documents and records of your organization. Don't be concerned if there are recommendations made for minor findings. After all, it is in everyone's best interests to have a local union that our membership trusts and respects. Being transparent in our actions and how we manage their dues money is vital to the long-term health of our union at all levels.

If you ever have a question about our TSAFF audits, or if you want help conducting your local union's audit, please contact myself, Bill Crews, or Mike Silva. We will always be available to do what we can to help you be successful.

WE
ARE **193**
IAFF Locals

SERVING **Fire**
18,537 **Fighters**

PROTECTING
30 Million
Texas Citizens



HERE'S HOW WE SUPPORT TEXAS FIRE FIGHTERS

- Education / Training
- Political Action / Government Affairs
- Bargaining and Negotiations
- Grievances and Arbitrations
- Occupational Health and Safety
- Financial Assistance
- Presumptive Diseases
- Union Governance



FEATURE

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

TSAFF recently invited six Texas firefighter leaders and Dr. Suzy Gulliver to discuss ongoing efforts to provide peer support and behavioral health resources to members around the state. Here's their discussion:

How would you assess the current state of behavioral health and peer support for Texas firefighters?

Bill Crews: Better than it was in years past. Each year we have seen the number of trained peer supporters grow. Every month I speak to at least one local working to form a peer support team within their local or department. More and more, issues are being handled by the local team or one in the area. These teams are also working hard to develop and grow their list of clinicians and resources in their area.

Suzy Gulliver: Peer support is growing by leaps and bounds in Texas. Instead of just having the people with CISM (critical incident stress management) skills, we're adding qualified peer support people. We've gotten across the message that peer support is not just crisis intervention, that it is more oriented towards building healthy firefighters, catching things early before they need intensive treatment. We can get firefighters turned back around before they're suffering from chronic illness. I am proud that a firefighter doesn't necessarily need to wait to get the process of treatments started. If they throw their hands up in the air on the weekend at night, saying, "I need help," one of our staff will respond to them. We can get them started with their baseline assessments and get them assigned to a clinician in person or by telehealth. Elsewhere around the country, I hear of two-year waitlists. Our firefighters don't have to deal with that – they'll almost always be seen by somebody who knows the fire service and who is delivering in evidence-based treatment.

Paul Thompson: Two years of COVID forced us to hit the pause button, but I think, here in El Paso we've had peer support in place for many years. We have issues because we have guys that are still struggling, including the August 3rd mass shooting and other challenges. Overall, I think we're doing better. Our number one concern is PTSD, suicidal issues like that. A firefighter who takes his or her life is one too many. I've established local relationships with rehab centers, here, that will get our guys help immediately. I think TSAFF is doing a great job. I think the IAFF is doing a great job. In the last couple years, I've sent at least three guys to the IAFF Center of Excellence. Some of them still have issues, but they're back on the job. Again, PTSD, suicidal tendencies and all of that – we can always do a better job there.

Corey Cabiness: What I've noticed speaking to firefighters from across the state is that departments that do not have an official peer support team in place do not truly understand what it is and how it differs from CISM. Peer support is a proactive approach to mental health, meaning that we are not only there for members in need, but we provide training and educational opportunities, providing awareness to different topics before it becomes a problem. We have definitely taken steps in the right direction with mental health being a hot topic, but we still have a lot of work left to be done.



Corey Cabiness

Beaumont L-399
Peer support team lead



Bill Crews

Garland L-1293
President, TSAFF trustee



Gabe Dominguez

Houston L-341
Director



Dr. Suzy Gulliver

Co-director, Trauma Research Consortium, Director, Warriors Research



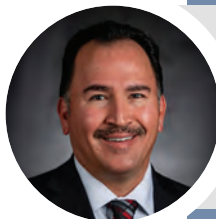
Chris Hale

TSAFF chaplain,
Abilene L-1044 (retired)



Eric Stewart

Midland L-4406
President



Paul Thompson

El Paso L-51
President

Gabe Dominguez: I think we're heading in the right direction, starting with our state presumptive law, that we were able to put back in place in the legislative session in 2019. That's a big step. For us, here in Houston, and the state association, as well as the IAFF, we're doing well on being proactive and trying to get everyone educated when it comes to peer support. We're the front line when it comes to our men and women in the fire service. And I like to tell everybody else, really, what we're doing is just caring for one another because at the end of the day it's us that have to take care of us. Ain't going to be anybody else, so I really appreciate what TSAFF is doing as well as the IAFF.

Eric Stewart: I think we've moved quite a bit over the years, and just getting the word out. In Midland, everybody knows about the program. We're trying to eliminate the stigma of getting help still. Within the last year, we've had two suicides. One was a retired guy who was involved in CISM his entire career. He knew it backwards and forwards. He was one of the leaders in it, creating it. So, I think we need reinforcement and outreach out there all the time – for members but also for our peer support teams. The stigma is going away, but we're not stopping the underlying stress. That's an area of concern for me.

Chris Hale: Preventing or stopping the crisis – that's my hope. There's still much work to be done. It has been encouraging to see stigmas broken and removed as we have moved forward. As issues are removed, we become increasingly aware of more problems. I'm grateful people are more willing to get help. We will continue to bring light to the resources to help our members with the concerns that matter to them – relationships, financial issues, addiction, and other stressors.

Gabe Dominguez: One of terms we use is "behavioral health mayday." There's no difference than pulling a mayday when you're on an incident-driven fire ground. If you don't pull that mayday, you're going to get trapped, you're going to be out of air. When I have my one-on-ones with firefighters, that's kind of what I use to sit down and talk to them. Say, "Look, you've run out of air. Your finances are a mess. You've gotten divorced. Now, here comes your career. Brother or sister, when are you going to pull that mayday?"



Paul Thompson: Gabe, I think that's an awesome way to start a hard conversation. We offer them these resources, they can pull that alarm bell for the mayday and get help from here.

Any troubling trends? Any promising ones?

Bill Crews: We continue to lose brothers and sisters to suicide. Many of these are also combat veterans. On the other hand, we are seeing more and more of our members reach out for help and follow through with getting the help they need greatly. Unfortunately, we only hear the numbers of those we lose. We will never completely appreciate the number of those we have helped.

Suzu Gulliver: We now have about as much anxiety and depression as we have PTSD. That's a little different from when we first started. In terms of depression and anxiety, firefighters are reporting more similarly to the general population. Another concern in the fire service around the state is increasing workplace violence. It seems to be a next wave, so we're prepping to see if there's more workplace violence, more stress in the fire station – more conflict between firefighters. Of course, there's ongoing concern about cancer. From my side of the desk, we're looking at connecting cancer to behavior and behavior to cancer. With cancer prevention, there's so much that firefighters can and still need to do. Gear management, of course, but also diet – fruits and veggies – better, relaxation, stress management and sleep. I

would call it care management. There's a large behavioral piece. And we haven't brought into play the full power of the behavioral side – in other words, changing cancer prevention behaviors. We also still have a lot of people avoiding early detection methods when firefighters should get right to the front of the line on early detection. Those issues are at the top of my list. Suicide is trending down slightly. Of course, it's against the backdrop that losing anybody to suicide is a terrible thing. We still need more evidence-based, culturally sensitive providers. We're putting a dent in the issue, but people don't understand how big a concern it is. The way it's a problem is this: a firefighter can chew up all of his or her behavioral health resources because they've assumed they've gotten an appointment with the right licensed provider. A provider, for example, may be incredibly gifted with women with postpartum depression, but not understand – and be able to treat – firefighters. We need to get our people in to see the right professionals.

Gabe Dominguez: On the troubling trends, we don't get to capture a lot of our firefighters until they enter the discipline process. They're not pulling the mayday until they see their career being threatened. That's when they actually ask for help.

Corey Cabiness: On a promising note, early on in my career, guys would look down on members for trying to get help on things that bothered them on calls. Today we are being more

proactive about assistance members need, realizing that it is something that we'll all struggle with at some point in time in our careers. I do also believe that there's a cultural change with firefighters. Firefighters today approach their job with a business mindset and develop professional working relationships. The problem with this mentality is that guys never truly get to know guys away from work. I've heard stories from second-, third-generation firefighters talk about how they used to spend time at the stations with their fathers where they'd get help on homework and whatever extracurricular activities they've participated in. Today, it is a rare occurrence that you see families at the stations. I truly believe that the rise in mental health issues goes hand in hand with the decrease in personal relationships.

Chris Hale: I see a lot of promising trends on the horizon. Continued training of our members, awareness, availability, and testimonies from our members will continue to spread the fact that peer support works. We continue to develop clinical resources and networking to put our members in the right hands at the right time. Our telemental health program with Dr. Gulliver's Warriors Research Institute is working, and

people are reaching out to the WRI when they don't have resources close at hand. The West Texas area, including Midland, Abilene, all points west, and El Paso, are all islands out here and sometimes resources aren't as readily available, so the telemental health program is incredible. One of the most promising and encouraging things, though, is our leadership. John, Brandon, and the TSAFF e-board are proactive and support this effort. Mental health and peer support are not supported in other states, and I've seen their people struggle.

Eric Stewart: Our outreach to membership as shown, at least here at Midland and when we've been to TSAFF events like conventions, the guys are hearing about the resources. The subject matter is more normalized. And on that, we've been so busy checking on people too because a lot of guys are referring other people all the time now. They'll call because a member might be going through a divorce. We get a lot of calls back just saying, "Hey, thanks for calling and now that you've called me I wanted to ask you about this or that." And so it's a conversation starter. It's a door opener. The concern, I guess, a negative trend is more because it's more normal, guys are coming out. The confidentiality,

while we keep everything confidential, when a guy has to go off for treatment, it's still spread like wildfire. Maybe that's just a concern of mine because even the guys when they come back, they're not that worried about it. More guys are very open about communicating, especially the young guys, they seem to be very, very eager to call and ask for help. The older guys still aren't. And when they call, usually it's a rough one, but the younger guys are getting help sooner.

Q With your local or program, what is a behavioral health point of pride recently?

Bill Crews: Members of our local have had the opportunity to participate in several IAFF and TSAFF deployments. We are proud that we are trusted and have those opportunities to assist. Our team has remained stable and is actually growing by 10 members in the next month.

Corey Cabiness: Our team has assisted members who have struggled with substance abuse, marital problems, PTSD-related issues, up to working with members who have had suicidal ideations. A lot of the work we've helped members with is usually a combination of life stresses, type of things they see and deal with



on shift. I can't think of a greater honor than when a member of the department I personally look up to, comes to me for assistance knowing that confidential information is shared with me and having a positive outcome. That allows that member to continue with a successful career, is something I take great pride in. For members to trust me during their time of need is something I'm extremely humbled by.

Suzy Gulliver: We have had at least 26 consecutive monthly peer support team meetings that Chris leads. We're teaching district leaders how to take information back out to the stations and in a proactive, preventative way. It hasn't been perfect, but it's been pretty robust. Our leaders are reporting good things. Bill, in particular, has helped with a lot of smaller scale disaster or crisis work. He's made the support much more predictable, successful, and quantifiable. I see more people being referred to the TSAFF benevolent fund which allows us to treat state association members free of charge. The numbers that have come forward for treatment are small, but those receiving help report getting better and satisfaction with the program. We also have been able to continue to train clinicians who are culturally aware. A big stumbling block in the past was finding clinicians that know about the fire service. That's changing. We've also got to address licensing restrictions and other regulations that can prevent treatment. I am encouraged, however, that we've also got six practicum students that will come into the system. It's slow, but we're bringing more clinical resources online.

Eric Stewart: Midland sent three guys to Dallas for peer support. We were glad to be able to be a part of that and be able to go down there and spread the peer support mission there. It was really good for our team to go down there and talk to the guys with Dallas, because in my opinion, it helped them come back with more confidence to go out to our own guys.

Gabe Dominguez: We're always pretty busy. Everything from suicides, to discipline, to health and safety, to different crisis. Every type of crisis that comes across, we're involved in our members. One of the things that we're also doing is we try to get involved with the resources that we have here available to us, which is the city employee assistance program (EAP), CISM is the ones that we try to get involved. I actually

sit on our CISM team, and then I'm usually on a weekly phone call with our EAP counselor. I know EAP has such a bad reputation across the country, but our city's not getting rid of it, so I interjected myself into it. That way, we can have a foot in the door and be able to see what they're doing since our city's not going to remove it, and it's there for us. I've been meeting weekly with EAP and then the CISM team might sit on it as well, and I get to look at their planning and when they're strategizing on going out there to meet with our members.

Corey Cabiness: Our program is basically two years old. For last year, we did a fundraiser. We sold T-shirts that said, "Break the stigma," as its motto. We had a very successful fundraiser and made enough money to assist with sending members to counseling and we're even able to provide a department-wide mental health training. Following the class, we had multiple firefighters reach out to us telling us they appreciated the class and that it was long overdue. One member in particular called me and told me that after class, members from around his station were actually talking about mental health-related problems that they had suffered from during their careers, which he feels would've never happened without that class. He told me that he feels that we have officially broken the stigma in Beaumont. As a team leader, I can't think of a better way to compliment a team than that.

Chris Hale: We started our peer support team in Abilene about three years ago, and it's moving forward; the guys are doing good work. It's a joint effort between the administration and our Local 1044. I still am the L-1044 chaplain and provide help as needed. I've seen it grow and develop and help people along the way, so I feel very good about that. As far as the state, a larger picture, I couldn't be prouder of everybody that's been involved. People see the need for peer support and have gotten behind it in Amarillo, the Metroplex, El Paso, Houston, Longview, Beaumont, the Rio Grande Valley, and everywhere in between. They are working together, sharing insights and ideas, and providing mutual aid when needed. From the beginning, Dr. Gulliver and Bill Crews have been crucial to the peer support program. Today, we have had 30 monthly TSAFF peer support leader meetings via Zoom. We are thankful for all who have participated and gained insight from Dr. Gulliver's teaching.

When members get peer support or go for treatment, are confidentiality and stigma problems?

Eric Stewart: No, it's quite the opposite. They are not upset about it. Most guys are coming back and telling their stories, but some things are leaked before guys get back. And even at that level, I haven't seen a lot of guys concerned about that. Many say, "Yes, it helped me. Yes, I want to tell my story." They're not ashamed of it by any means. But there's still a few people that are terrified of that and those are the ones I want to make sure still get the help too.

Corey Cabiness: Our issue really hasn't been rumors getting around - ours is just guys noticing that people have been gone for six weeks. Most of them just reach out to us and say, "I hope they're doing okay." And it's never been anything like that. Everybody that's been to the Center of Excellence for us has come back and has just thought wonders about it. It was never anything negative. So that's been my feedback about it.

What's going on with workers compensation claims in this area?

Gabe Dominguez: One trend we're seeing is denial of PTSD presumptive claims. I think it's the third-party administrators like TML and Tristar really picking and choosing what's approved. But even the ones that we have won, we've had trouble finding psychologists or psychiatrists that take workers comp. Most clinicians are usually self-pay or their local has some sort of a leverage fund that they're pulling from. But if we're following these DWC1 forms to establish a claim through the state, it should be covered under workers' comp at 100 percent. Another issue is that there's not that many clinicians to pull from or that many facilities to pull from. But it even gets smaller once you win that claim, there's a very small pool. In Houston, I only have two. Fortunately, the Center of Excellence is a workers comp provider. But I think what helps with these claims is it's almost like our cancer claims. If that doctor's willing to correlate that cancer, and it also goes back to our member. If our members are being able to provide the incident that created the trauma, it's going to be more beneficial to be able to approve his claim. But getting that letter of correlation helps a

lot better. But I think our issue is just like cancer claims. I think, I forecast now that we start doing claims across the state for behavioral health, I think we're going to have the same battle going forward.

Eric Stewart: Midland has had the same issue with the workers comp. The city has not denied anybody, but there is nobody that does a workers comp mental health. It's so new that, like we're saying, there's not yet enough resources for mental health claims. Maybe it'll fix itself with the presumptive law in the future.

Chris Hale: Providers must see a clear revenue stream to take workers comp patients because that could stand in the way of other clients. Clinicians often have a full schedule of clients and don't have room necessarily when our members need immediate help. And sometimes, it becomes an insurance roadblock when clinicians don't take workers compensation. Teams around the state are solving this issue by keeping a clinician on retainer.

Besides the 16 team leaders around the state, how many people you all have trained and put into the communities as resources?

Chris Hale: When we started four years ago, we trained a little over 200 people. We're pushing over 500 trained Texas peers to date. Training is scheduled every month or two and about 30 get taught in every class.

Eric Stewart: Here in Midland, critical incident stress debriefing and CISM was around when I got on. I was involved in that for 20-something years. I believe Gabe, me, Richard LeClair, we all went through the first Texas class in Waco and that's when we were looking for the peer support side of it more than just the critical incident stuff. We came back and really started emphasizing the need for peer support for everyday incidents more of a rather than just critical. I think once our fire administration and the city saw the outreach and the station visits and everything that it entailed, they really bought in and have been supporting us ever since. We now have an intro class where we just go into the new recruits and visit with them for about an hour and then open up a whole afternoon for questioning and visitation. Then, we do station visits every. We try to do it every year. Then,

when we have incidences, even small ones, we try to at least do an outreach program where we just send a couple of guys by once a month to visit. It's been ongoing. It's always evolving. Here in Midland, we don't have a lot of resources, so we use EAP for 90 percent of our outreach.

Chris Hale: We need continuing peer support education because most of our peers have basic peer training, which is excellent, continuing education is the next solid step. The new resiliency class is available and provides a foundational resource for our peers. We need ongoing peer workshops in person or online to be available for peers and peer teams. Funding and trainers for these types of continuing education opportunities are being sought.

How do the TSAFF, the IAFF and programs like Dr. Gulliver's and others best work together?

Corey Cabiness: I view the different aspects as part of an incident command structure. All peer support team members have participated in their local in their regional levels dealing with the normal day-to-day issues that arise. At time, the local resources get overwhelmed and the TSAFF peer support team steps in. During major disasters, TSAFF invites in the IAFF. Oftentimes, firefighters from across the state are looking for resources to share with the brothers or sisters, and programs such as Dr. Gulliver are critical in getting them the professional help that they need. Dr. Gulliver also plays a vital role with assisting the TSAFF team with training on a monthly basis and being a professional on-site during deployments. All three aspects are truly one team working together for a common cause.

Chris Hale: President Riddle, Secretary-Treasurer Day, and IAFF DVP McGee work together to support our programs and they have a clear idea of the mental health needs of our members. They are visionary in stepping out and being at the forefront of our peer efforts involving training and peer team responses and are advocates for mental health awareness. Mutual peer support aid is working. Dr. Gulliver is pivotal in what we've been able to do in Texas, and I concur with what each of you has said about her support. She's been vital to helping us get peer support statewide. She is there and available

whenever we need her. It's been crucial. I think things are moving in the right direction.

Bill Crews: Like anything else, with clear communication, we can improve. With open lines of communications we can understand the needs of each of the organizations and what each brings to the table.

Gabe Dominguez: In the 2017 response to Hurricane Harvey, we ran a unified command system – with the TSAFF, the IAFF and Dr. Gulliver. I call her our SME, subject matter expert or our IC for the incident. We're fortunate she's in our backyard because she's one of the few that can do it. Make sure if the city sees one of your members get an unfit for duty, get with Suzy and the Warrior Institute about a second opinion and do an assessment on that member. If you all have civil service and you go in front the commission and if you don't have civil service, it's still going to help to get that opinion from Dr. Suzy. She carries a lot of weight in the world of behavioral health.

Suzy Gulliver: The most important thing is to really lobby for healthy, peer support teams. That way, we get better early detection when behavioral health problems are coming up – and we can discern among cases that need higher levels of care. We're working on maintaining referral sources if we ever get too busy to see people quickly. We're working to get more clinicians that understand that writing somebody off the truck may not actually help them. The last thing I want a firefighter questioning is whether he or she will ever be an active-duty firefighter again if they get help. There's so much that can be done now to help with all of the challenges firefighters face.

What challenges must we better address going forward?

Corey Cabiness: I believe we must address funding better EAP-style resources. Mental health related professionals are not cheap. And unless it's a non-profit organization such as Dr. Suzy Gulliver's, you get what you pay for. Departments invest money and equipment along with trainings to do their jobs. However, for the most part, they drop the ball with addressing how to take things home. Not having the financial backing hinders this training progress. Cities also need to do a better job with who

they contract for their EAPs. Firefighters from across the state report a common frustration that when they contact the department EAPs, they're finding out that providers are no longer in practice. Or they're given a two- to three-month wait time before an appointment is made. When a firefighter admits he or she has a problem, they need someone now. And we must find a better way of vetting these resources and getting the proper funding that we need.

Chris Hale: We must stay on top of training peers throughout the state, developing peer teams, and continually growing. Peer teams need to be networked together to find beneficial resources. I concur with what was said earlier. Even without complete funding, we've found ways to forge ahead so far. We're at a juncture where funding is an issue as we advance.

Gabe Dominguez: Funding's a big deal too. In Houston, our firefighter support network, which our CISM team falls under and our two psychologists, has no funding. Usually, our local has to supplement some of it through our charitable foundation. So, I know a bunch of locals have set up benevolent funds, or a charitable fund. And

they're going to have to work with a clinician of being able to establish maybe a matching fund with a city. Maybe look at it when we resume collective bargaining. Perhaps the city should set up a matching fund compared to our benevolent fund. The costs are real. A member sees a clinician three to seven times, and they're done – maybe. So, over time, depending on what the member needs, it can get very costly.

Bill Crews: We must continue to address the need for culturally competent clinicians in every region of the state. Education of our members is paramount keeping in mind that the true power of peer support is its pro-activeness. If we are educating our members from recruitment to retirement, we can avoid so many problems. It has always been said an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. For many years our response to behavioral health issues was a reactive one, we must continue to change the trend to pro-active.

Suzy Gulliver: Early education and early detection are critical. We must teach behavioral health and wellness skills earlier. Emotion regulation is a skill we need to introduce in

fire academies. Along with the physical fitness standards, and the health and wellness initiatives, we need to offer resilience strategies – and not just after the fact. That also gives a better chance to of understanding and preventing some of the inter-generational problems we now see. All of it leads to a healthier, happier workforce going forward.

What should TSAFF affiliate leaders know about available resources?

Corey Cabiness: Most importantly: Get involved with peer support. Get involved and start networking with other teams and leaders in your area. A couple of years ago when we started our team in Beaumont, we had no idea what we were getting ourselves into. And now, we have a pretty strong team or a very strong team that has tailored to what works best for our firefighters. We also have resources from across the state that we knew nothing about until we got involved.

Chris Hale: The TSAFF and IAFF have ongoing training and most communities offer training; get on their mailing lists to get and stay



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informed. Networking during training will expose more members to more resources. If you know firefighters in other cities who are unaware of the benefits of peer support and peer teams, encourage them to participate in training. Spread the word about the Warrior's Research Institute's Telemental Health Program, free for TSAFF members.

Gabe Dominguez: The biggest thing is networking, learning from each other. And the number one thing I tell everybody, I've been very fortunate to travel the country and do a bunch of behavioral health classes. At the end of the day, it doesn't matter how much classes you take or who you listen to, I'm going to tell you this right now, it's all about one, being passionate and about caring. Because there's been times where I get to the member, right, like Corey said, we got no funding. And at the time, we didn't even have a benevolent fund. We just cried together, man. I mean, and he was just glad that I was there. He goes, "Man, I'm glad you care, Gabe. I didn't see anybody coming over my house. I was going to commit suicide."

Chris Hale: It goes back to that old saying; people don't care what you know until they know you care. Our peers have empathy and compassion for our members. If our peers don't have and show empathy and compassion, it doesn't matter how many resources are available; our members won't respond. Once they know you care, that goes a long way toward getting people the help they need.

Suzy Gulliver: They should know our hotline number for referrals – that's [phone number] – and there's also the website – URL. It's not a hotline like the suicide hotline. It's not for someone that we need to send an ambulance to collect, but it is somebody it for anybody who has a question. That phone number is staffed 24/7. I also would recommend contacting any of the 16 TSAFF team leaders around the state. Chris and Bill always are good contacts. They and the others can listen and troubleshoot even if you're uncertain about what's needed.

Chris Hale: Letting our members know that, especially in the mental illness portion, help is available. Things can be successfully treated. We have clinicians; getting to the right one may take a minute, but we have people who can help. Our members have to know that help is on the

way. And that's why we're here. This help comes from every angle in Texas – from leadership to our teams, to you guys, to our clinicians. All these efforts come out of a real place to help our members' lives be better, to break these stigmas, & to alleviate undo suffering. Folks are hurting; they're suffering. I guarantee that if they're suffering, their families are also suffering. Our help is the initial step towards healing for our members & their families.

Bill Crews: They need to know that we must work together to build a comprehensive list of resources. In the next year the TSAFF and District 11 Peer Teams will be working to build the framework to consolidate those resource lists into an easily accessible platform. We will also be working to improve the communication between trained Peers in the state. Communication to pass on education, respond to needs, and assemble teams for deployments in the state and district.



Anything else to add?

Chris Hale: I want to add this and if I've said it before, I think it's important to repeat: As a chaplain, I first went through the peer support training, sitting in the back row. And when they got through, I said, "You know what this is?" They looked at me funny. I said, "All this is, is a ministry without the overt spiritual context. It's walking with people. It's loving people. It's being there for people. It's pointing people in the right direction. It's doing all the things that ministry does." I was sold immediately. I know that in the past, many of these things have been given to one chaplain to handle. When we have several people checking the pulse of the department & responding to needs, it is better than having a single individual, who is sometimes a chaplain, trying to respond to the needs of an entire fire department. I guarantee a lot of the people that get involved are coming from a spiritual point of view. There are coming to help and love people. And the people they love the most are their families and the people they work with. I commend everybody's efforts. You all are making a difference. I truly believe you all are saving lives. So, thank you all very much. It's all about those relationships. It's all about relationships.

Bill Crews: The IAFF Behavioral Health Team delivered the first beta class for clinicians that

want to be more culturally competent. This is a huge step into developing resources for our members. The class was held in Concord, New Hampshire and was a great success. Dr. Gulliver and I were privileged to be a part of the delivery and the ongoing development of the class. Another class was held in Kansas City, Missouri. The class will again be scrutinized and further developed. Once the class is ready, I hope that we will be able to host several classes across the state to further grow our list of clinicians available to our members.

Corey Cabiness: At some point in time in our society we have disconnected and stop caring for others the way that we should. We need to get back to loving our fellow brothers and sisters. Peer support to me is nothing more than the gospel. It allows me the chance to talk with firefighters when they are at their weakest time and show them the love that Christ has displayed to me throughout my life.

Gabe Dominguez: Just keep up the good work, brothers and sisters. I mean, I love you all. Be safe out there. And we're doing it. Keep up the networking. Keep up the education. Keep up the loving and caring. And we'll be able to climb mountains.

Chris Hale: Amen.

TSAFF Members



Please help us help you by staying in contact.

1. Please log in to TSAFF.org to update or activate your account for upcoming text and email alerts, and other information.
2. Please like the TSAFF Facebook page and the TSAFF Twitter feed— @TSAFFNews — and encourage your family and friends to do so as well.

Thank you.

TSAFF Peer Support Contacts

The TSAFF Peer Support Team includes firefighters from all six Texas districts who have been trained in providing emotional and mental health support to our union brother and sister firefighters in the state of Texas. TSAFF Peer Supporters have all received IAFF and TSAFF training. The team provides assistance to active and retired firefighters experiencing behavioral health issues.



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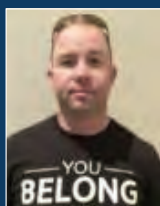
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District 1 Champions of HB 2468 Deserve Thanks

*Vice President
Bobby Whiteley*

The hard work of Texas firefighters earned passage of HB 2468, the bill that ensures catastrophically injured firefighters will receive lifetime income benefits if they can no longer work — and I am inspired by the work put in on the issue by Matt Dawson of Lubbock L-972. Matt, like Andy Allison of Lewisville L-3606, is working to overcome career-ending, life-threatening injuries suffered on the job. Both courageously fought for their lives and then for all Texas firefighters in support of HB 2468.

The 2023 Texas legislative session delivered a mixed bag of results for many Texans, but with the leadership of Rep. Dustin Burrows and Sen. Charles Perry, we got an important change with the bill named after Matt and Andy. Injured firefighters like them will face less red tape and frustration as they recover and rebuild their lives. I'm appreciative of all of our members, staff and friends that worked with legislators and staff to get this bill passed. The same goes for everyone who worked during the five months of the regular legislative sessions on all kinds of issues that affect the fire service. I know at one point we were monitoring nearly 500 pieces of legislation. So, again, thanks for all of the hard work and long hours in Austin. Every bit of effort helps take care of firefighter families and your community. I also know that our success in Austin began with the groundwork our members and TSAFF staff did in their home communities.

As we head to El Paso for our biennial convention, let's recognize the two years of work the members of L-51 have put in on the convention. Our brothers and sisters there are committed to providing a great convention for you. This year, we've got important resolutions to consider in setting the course for the next

two years of our state association, but we also will fellowship with our brothers and sisters.

In other political work, Texas firefighters were once again in Washington, D.C., recently. To advance the fire service and help protect public safety, Texas firefighter leaders met with Texas members of Congress and their staffs, including Rep. Dan Crenshaw, Rep. Lance Gooden, Rep. Randy Weber, Rep. Colin Allred, Rep. Morgan Luttrell, Rep. Ronny Jackson, and Rep. Jodey Arrington.

“Our success in Austin began with the groundwork our members and TSAFF staff did in their home communities.”

Please allow me to take a point of personal privilege to thank a recently retired member who was a strong president of his local for more than 15 years: Craig Harkcom of Pampa L-3293. Here are a few things that come to mind when I consider Craig's long list of achievements in Pampa:

- Craig built outstanding, productive relationships with his fire department administration to better serve his members.
- He was active in all levels of campaigns for elected officials: city, county, state and U.S. representative.
- He was a go-to guy for the fire department when advice was needed for apparatus and tool purchases.
- He regularly attended TSAFF and IAFF events to take back information and



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knowledge for his members.

- Always a professional, he left his local better than he found it — and I believe the same can be said for his community.
- And, certainly not least, he worked with the TSAFF and IAFF to win conservative voter support of collective bargaining referendum won by his local.

In other words, Craig is a testament of putting his members first and using TSAFF and IAFF resources to help his department and community. He set an example of what we all should be doing for our brothers and sisters.

Finally, please indulge me a second point of personal privilege: Congratulations to my son, Dustin, who was recently promoted to lieutenant. This guy is just one of the many reasons I have been accused of being a bit too passionate about the fire service. Everyone in our occupation deserves to earn a fair wage, benefits, health and safety. Our members work diligently to protect our communities and deserve a fair income to take care of their families and educate their children.

Strength in Brotherhood!

District 2

Let's Build on TSAFF Momentum

*Vice President
Beau Simpson*

Looking back at the 2023 legislative session, I am happy to report that we succeeded in early successes in getting our endorsed bills out of committee and on the Texas House and Senate floors.

The details of our legislative work this year are described elsewhere in this issue, but for anyone that asks what the TSAFF does for you, this is an example of one of your most important benefits. We continue to improve our presumption laws. This verbiage change will hopefully decrease our amounts of presumptive denials we face. We should all be proud of the Andy Allison-Matt Dawson bill. Andy, a firefighter from Lewisville L-3606 and Matt, a firefighter from Lubbock L-972, sustained career-ending injuries in the line of duty. This bill will improve long-term workers' comp benefits for all Texas first responders. These are just a few of the many bills being worked on at the state capitol by TSAFF.

Due to the importance of these bills, we had firefighters in Austin every day of the session speaking on our behalf. I would personally like to thank President Riddle, Government Affairs Director Glenn Deshields, Legislative Director Fruge, 3rd District Vice President Alvarado, 6th District Vice President Marty Lanction, Trustee Mike Silva, all of our district legislative agents, and the many others that are working tirelessly on behalf of firefighters across this great state.

Over the last year, multiple locals across District 2 have been having issues with their fire chiefs and cities. McKinney L-2661 is one of the many locals that have been diligently working with their city to improve relationships with city management and the fire chief's office. The members presented a vote of no confidence against the chief with an overwhelming

majority showing their lack of confidence in the chief to city officials. After a long and tedious process, the fire chief decided to resign from his duties. Shortly after this decision was made, newly hired Assistant Chief Paul Dow (previously the Fire Chief of Albuquerque) was named Interim Fire Chief. L-2661 President Chris Mayzner immediately began working with Interim Chief Dow and the command staff to improve relations with field and staff per-

“We continue to improve our presumption laws. This will hopefully decrease the presumptive denials we face.”

sonnel. Interim Chief Dow was recently named the newest Fire Chief of the City of McKinney. Recently, the McKinney Fire Department tragically lost two of its members, Firefighter Daniel Crow and Captain Jamie “Bull” Graham. While Chief Dow was already providing a positive work environment for his members, he led his department through these events and showed true and genuine love for his people. We are all thankful for the refreshing leadership that Chief Dow has brought to the City of McKinney and its firefighters. Welcome to Texas, Chief Dow and we look forward to working with you for years to come.

From working with your local departments to working with legislators at the state capitol, we have proven if we stay together, work in a



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positive manner, and represent our members to the best of our ability, Texas firefighters can accomplish anything we put our minds to. Some situations are easy fixes and others are long arduous processes. Stay the course, remain positive and persistent, and always represent your members in a professional manner.

Lastly, I am excited to announce that I am seeking re-election as your District 2 Vice President this summer in El Paso at the 48th Biennial Convention. The last two years have been a unique experience and I look forward to improving the services I can provide as your DVP. Our state association has been extremely successful over the last six to eight years, but we still have room to improve. I assure you: Your executive board is constantly working to grow our association, improve our services, and improve benefits for all of our members. With your support, I look forward to serving as your DVP for the next four years.

I look forward to seeing you all in El Paso soon and would like to offer a sincere thank you to El Paso L-51 President Paul Thompson and his members for all the work they are putting into this convention and ensuring we will all have a memorable time.

District 4

2023 Brings New Challenges; FireOps Events Build Rapport

Vice President
Mark Medrano

As 2023 marches on, we continue to make progress in the 4th District, working through some of the usual fire service issues and a few new ones. Like you, our TSAFF executive board, staff, DLAs and DL-SRs have continued to muscle our way through the difficult past couple of years.

As we headed into the TSAFF Biennial Convention in El Paso, firefighter leaders from our district met to discuss the business of the convention. Thanks to The Woodlands L-3846 for hosting the caucus. We had a good turnout and a lively discussion about the resolutions.

The Woodlands also hosted another strong FireOps program recently. Hosting local, state and federal elected officials is a cost-effective way to build rapport and better community understanding of the fire service. The day's guests experienced live fire, vehicle extrication, a cardiac event simulation, and fire ground operations. President Erik Secrest and The Woodlands local put on a great event once again.

In other district news:

- For more than two years, Beaumont L-399 has defended against attacks by the City of Beaumont in court and on the job in the aftermath of the Fire/EMS merger there. Through effective political action, Beaumont firefighters helped oust a hostile mayor and re-elect a common-sense city council member. I'm hopeful we'll see improvements in Beaumont soon. Either way, the firefighters and union are doing good work there.
- Lufkin L-3034 is contending with a challenging fire chief. In the 41 months since he took office, 45 employees have left the fire department through resignations or suspensions. Recently, two paramedics were

terminated by the medical director who refused to let them operate under his license. The fire chief then refused to let them appeal the suspensions. A related lawsuit is pending against the city. A third employee also was suspended for disagreeing with the punishments. We are working with L-3034 President Mack Grace to help improve the workplace there.

“Turning around bad political situations begins with a plan – and we can help there.”

- Welcome to our newest local, Pedernales L-4820, led by President Michael Teague.
- Missouri City L-4063's president, Greg Ybarra, continues his fight for reinstatement after a wrongful termination. He is utilizing the IAFF Guardian Policy for his defense.
- The following locals have relatively new presidents: North Lake Travis Fire L-4934 (Jessilyn Thompson), Mexia L-5273 (Brad "Pappy" Mills), Pflugerville L-4137 (Trevor Stokes). They've all hit the ground running and are doing great work.
- Many thanks to Marc Clifford of Killeen L-2555 for his service as the 4th District DFRS for the past several years. Marc has focused his commitments on family, fire service work and the pursuit of a master's



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degree. Colin Batchelor of Nederland L-3339 is stepping up to succeed Marc.

- Galveston L-571 lost a brother, Andrew Jefferies, recently. May he rest in peace.
- And, finally, I'm proud of my home local, Baytown L-1173, for getting out and being politically active in recent elections. Being involved and influential in your local and state elections is paramount in ensuring firefighters have a voice and that our communities are safe. Keep up the great work!

What many locals are finding out is that fighting should be the last option, not the first. We can fight, if necessary, and it does become necessary, but having effective relationships at city hall and at the state capitol is 100 times more productive as an option.

If you aren't involved in your local and state politics, but want to be, please reach out to me or our political/legislative team. We can help you get set up and working towards meeting your local's political goals. Turning around bad political situations begins with a plan – and we can help there. We are always available for any questions or problems you may have.

I look forward to seeing you all at convention in El Paso.



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District 5 Facing Fire Service Suicides

Vice President
Pedro “Pete” Martinez

Fire Fighter suicide is an alarming problem that has only recently come to the forefront of public attention. According to a 2017 study by the Ruderman Family Foundation, fire fighters in the United States are more likely to die from suicide than in the line of duty, with estimates indicating that there are between 100 and 200 suicide deaths each year among fire service personnel.

The causes of fire service suicide are complex and may include post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, substance abuse, and other mental health issues. Research has also suggested links between shift work and the prevalence of suicide among firefighters. Studies have found that firefighters who work night shifts or long-term overtime hours have up to three times higher rates of suicidal ideation and behavior than other emergency responders.

The resources are available, both from the International and at our state level. Dr. Suzy Gulliver, Chaplain Chris Hale, and Trustee Bill Crews are leading the effort within our state association. From monthly statewide meetings to visiting with locals and providing classes, they are tirelessly working to better not only the response to a mental health crisis, but to recognize them before our brother and sister feel there is nothing else.

It doesn't stop with them; it's the responsibility of each and every one of us to do whatever it takes to take care of each other. The fire service is a family, though we can be dysfunctional at times, we are a family who protects our own. We are at a crossroads, and just when we thought we had turned the corner, District 5 lost a brother to suicide. It makes me absolutely angry that we are still losing our family members to suicide. Why? We have three individuals within our organization

who dedicate countless hours and work tirelessly for us. Why is this still happening?

We need to take a stand and fight for the mental health of our fire fighters. This is not something we can ignore. We owe everything to our members who dedicate their lives to serving their communities, and we cannot let them suffer in silence. Therefore, it is vital to continue investing in peer support programs that prioritize fire fighter mental health. These programs are an invaluable resource for all fire fighters and must be implemented everywhere. Together, we can bring an end to fire fighter suicide by helping each other manage the stress of our life-saving jobs – not just through traditional medical treatments but also through camaraderie within the firefighting community. It's up to all of us – fire fighters, friends, family, and supporters—to use



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this as a reminder that what unites us far exceeds what divides us, and if we all come together, no firefighter will ever feel alone again. We need to do whatever it takes to end fire fighter suicide – it's time everyone unites in solidarity to take care of our own!

↓ *Joseph Wallace of Lubbock L-972 and Todd Peden of Amarillo L-542 joined other firefighter leaders at the recent TSAFF 1st, 2nd and 5th District caucus meeting ahead of the biennial convention.*



District 6

SCOTX Upholds CBA for Texas Firefighters

City of Houston loses constitutional challenge

Vice President

Patrick M. “Marty” Lancton

The Supreme Court of Texas ruled that the City of Houston violated the state constitution in refusing to honor voter-approved fair pay and benefits protections for Houston firefighters and all other first responders in Texas.

This is a historic ruling. Never before has a local government refused to honor the will of the voters. The treatment our firefighters have endured over the last five years is unforgivable. They have stood strong and courageous in the face of overwhelming political odds. We remain grateful to the court and the voters, for continuing to stand by us through this fight.

In another ruling, the court struck down Houston’s Proposition B. pay parity referendum as conflicting with the voter-approved state constitutional amendment guaranteeing firefighters and all other first responders the right to collective bargaining. The court’s decision upheld the collective bargaining law, which is the only protection available to firefighters and police officers in a state that prohibits first responders from striking when denied fair pay, benefits and working conditions. The ruling compels the city to resolve the Collective Bargaining Impasse from 2017 by a third neutral party. The city does not have sovereign immunity and Firefighter’s are owed back pay with interest comparable to private sector back to July 1st, 2017 as ordered by judicial enforcement.

In the meantime, the Texas Legislature is considering a bill to require binding arbitration managed by an independent third party selected jointly by firefighters and the City when collective bargaining does not work. The bill, sponsored by state Sen. John Whitmire (D-Houston), won approval from the Texas

Senate. It is designed to prevent the stalemate Houston firefighters have had to deal with under the current mayor from ever happening again. Mayor Sylvester Turner is the only mayor in Houston history to be unable to reach a contract agreement with firefighters.

Throughout this long fight, we have appreciated the support of International Association of Fire Fighters President Ed Kelly, who said, “Houston firefighters and their families have been well-represented by their union leadership. This is a victory for all of labor.”



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L-341’s Binding Arbitration Bill Signed Into Law

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott has signed into law a bill mandating binding arbitration, managed by an independent third party, when collective bargaining between Houston L-341 and the City of Houston fails.

The law marks a crucial victory for L-341 members who have sought a new contract with the city for more than six years. The legislation (S.B. 736), sponsored by State Senator John Whitmire (D-Houston) and State Rep. Mary Ann Perez (D-Houston), took effect immediately following the Governor’s signature. L-341 has issued an urgent letter to the City of Houston requesting the immediate resumption of stalled contract negotiations spanning 2018 to the present.

Houston fire fighters have been suffering severe understaffing and diminished morale due to the years-long contract stalemate. The bill requires the appointment of three arbitrators – one appointee selected by the fire fighters, one chosen by the City, and one mutually agreed upon by both parties. This gives Houston fire fighters a much stronger voice and signals an end to the labor impasse is in sight.

The two sponsors of SB 736 hailed its enactment.

“With overwhelming, bipartisan support in both the Senate and the House and now the Governor’s signature, this new law will ensure that our dedicated Houston fire fighters are no longer ignored,” said Whitmire.

“Fire fighters put their lives on the line every day to protect us through hurricanes, floods, pandemics, and freezes,” added Perez. “They are vital to the safety and security of the community they serve and always answer the call. They have waited long enough for a contract, and I am so proud to have been a part of Senate Bill 736.”

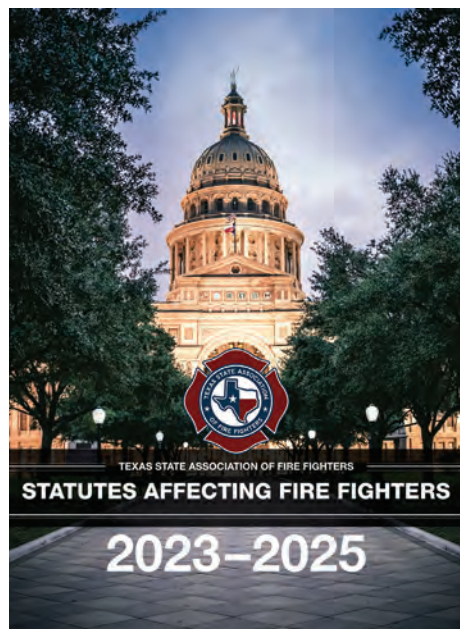
Legislative Report

Firefighters Gain Ground at State Capitol

Government Affairs Director
Glenn Deshields

The TSAFF legislative team, led by Glenn Deshields and Chase Fruge, along with staff, appointees and hundreds of Texas firefighters successfully navigated a tumultuous, 140-day 2023 legislative session.

While interparty infighting led to inaction on some issues and controversies arose throughout the session, TSAFF quietly worked hard to pass, amend and kill fire service-related legislation. TSAFF members made hundreds of meetings with elected officials and staff. Firefighters were provided with a TSAFF-produced Firefighters Issues Book for use in meetings or to leave behind. The book addressed issues such as the workers compensation system, firefighter pension issues, local control and property taxes, and dues and payroll deductions. At the end of the regular session, the TSAFF Statutes Book, a reference



2023-2025 TSAFF Statutes Book [↑](#)

of relevant fire service-related laws. That guide is available through the TSAFF office – either by PDF or in print.

The legislative highlight of this session would be the Andy Allison-Matt Dawson Act. This bill ensures you and your family are taken care of if you are injured on duty to the point of unemployability. Pending looming special sessions, here's a summary of bills that passed, along with legislator leaders on the issues:

HB 4227

Rep. Goldman / Sen. Hancock

This bill would prevent the repeal of civil service for any city over 950,000 population.

HB 2468

Rep. Burrows / Sen. Perry

This bill ensures catastrophically injured firefighters are able to receive lifetime income benefits if they are rendered unemployable.

HB 471

Rep. Patterson / Sen. Schwertner

This bill would prevent an employer from terminating a firefighter on leave for a workplace injury in the first year. It would also allow a firefighter to use leave and have other firefighters volunteer to work for them after that year expires. This bill applies to all professional firefighters that work for a political subdivision (city, township, ESD, etc.).

HB 898

Rep. Stucky / Sen. Parker

This bill increases penalties for those that cause accidents when they don't slow down or move over for emergency vehicles.



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HB 5344

Rep. Cecil Bell / Sen. Creighton

This bill only applies to The Woodlands Township and gives those firefighters the ability to purchase health insurance at cost from their employer upon retirement.

HB 2464

Rep. Price / Sen. Hughes

This bill allows a two-year period for cities with TMRS retirement plans to begin cost of living adjustments for retirees without penalties. This expires in 2026.

SB 736

Sen. Whitmire / Rep. Perez

This bill only applies to Houston and requires binding arbitration in the event of an impasse in Chapter 174 collective bargaining negotiations.

SB 1413

Sen. Johnson / Rep. Frazier

This bill allows firefighters to remove vehicles from the roadway without liability for damages.

Political Report

Highlights of 2023 Election Cycle: Wins in Tough Races

Legislative Director
Chase Fruge

So far this year, TSAFF-member locals, along with state association political consultant Mike Stevens / ActionDATA, and independent consultants have prevailed in local political campaigns throughout Texas. Among the highlights of the current election cycle are:

Abilene L-1044:

Firefighters endorsed two first-time candidates, attorney Blaise Regan and pastor Scott Beard. While Beard lost in the Place 4 race, Regan won outright with 59 percent in a four-candidate Place 3 field.

Amarillo L-542:

In a smart, cost-effective political campaign two years in the making, firefighters improved their political standing at city hall. With L-542's support, Josh Craft, a Randall County firefighter, defeated a city council candidate that had won tens of millions of dollars in the Texas lottery.

Arlington L-1329:

Firefighter-endorsed incumbent candidates Nikkie Hunter and Jim Ross won District 3 city council and mayoral races, respectively. In close races, both overcame major obstacles with critically timed messaging focused on voter tendencies revealed in local election records.

Beaumont L-399:

Firefighters helped challenger Roy West defeat an incumbent mayor who ignored allegations of city mismanagement of the fire department. In a three-way race, West won without a runoff with 52 percent. Firefighters helped West fight through an ugly campaign with constant block walking, telephone, text,

email, social media and direct mail outreach. Firefighters also supported incumbent Taylor Nield who was re-elected in the Councilmember Ward 1 race with 75 percent of the vote.

Carrollton L-2182:

Firefighters helped Steve Babick and Daisy Palomo win election. Babick, who had a significant opponent in the mayoral race, won with 52 percent of the vote, and Palomo, who had lost her previous runs for city council, surged to 62 percent in the Place 6 race. Running both candidates on a slate together leveraged the firefighters' endorsement and proved successful.

Cedar Hill L-3463:

Firefighters endorsed Maranda Auzenne, who emerged as the runoff winner in a City Council Place 6 race that began with five candidates. Auzenne won the runoff with 65 percent.

El Paso L-51:

Firefighters presented a down-ballot but important issue regarding changes to police and fire pension benefits. Through creation of a targeted voter database, firefighters focused outreach on certain voter profiles likely to vote on related issues. With a message that emphasized improving the city's bond rating and ensuring solvency of the pension fund, firefighters moved about 10 percent of the voter base to win with 59 percent on the Proposition 1 vote.

Garland L-1293:

Firefighters helped endorsed candidates win the mayoral and City Council 3 races outright no runoffs. Voter outreach focused on encouraging past supporters to turn out again in strength for the re-elections of Scott LeMay as mayor (75 percent) and Ed Moore in City



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Council District 3 (65 percent).

Grand Prairie L-3255:

Firefighters helped propel incumbent Jorja Clemson to a win in the City Council District 1 race with 78 percent. Focused on undecided voters, firefighters helped educate the community about Clemson's 10-year record on council ahead of the win.

Lewisville L-3606:

Firefighters were successful in helping reelect Ronni Cade to Place 3 on City Council. With an understanding of necessary fire service resources and training, Cade defeated an opponent that was not firefighter friendly.

McKinney L-2661:

Firefighter-endorsed city council candidates Michael Jones and Patrick Couleteria won Precinct 2 and At-Large council positions in a crowded field of candidates. Analysis of McKinney voter data proved critical. Firefighters used OTT (also known as streaming TV ads), social media, text messaging, and commercials to wins without runoffs.

Service Report

Cities Discipline Firefighters for Post-Traumatic Stress

Service Director
Rafael Torres

The 2023 year continues in usual fashion with a slight upswing in discipline across the state. It is also a time that locals begin or continue their negotiations with their respective cities. Adding to this your jobs as your local leaders, firefighting duties, and family commitments not to mention tax time, summer family obligations, and the list can go on. This is a perfect recipe for STRESS and all its associated problems it can cause. PTSD is a disease that can affect all of us in a variety of ways.

Recently there has been an increase in discipline related to directly or indirectly to firefighters having and not dealing properly

with PTSD. One important item that must be considered is that many firefighters dealing with matters arising from Occupational Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (“post-traumatic stress injury” is how I refer to it) often have no idea why they are feeling that way. In the past year, we have had three indefinite suspensions where the discipline was related to PTSD/PTSI.

We as local union leaders have a responsibility to assist these members with their illness. Remember that PTSD/PTSI is a compensable work injury if the injury is connected to an occupational incident that triggered this event. The firefighters that were recently suspended because of issues developing from the coping mechanism of this disorder can be attributed to the department head not being educated on the effects of PTSD/PTSI in the fire service. Remember that taking the time to talk to your fire administration is the first step in making sure your members are being represented in this matter. The TSAFF and IAFF both have resources that can assist you in making sure your department and city are well informed about firefighters and the real struggle with PTSD/PTSI.

In taking this first step to educate ourselves and our department we are helping to make the work place a better environment for everyone. Then when a firefighter is spotlight after a significant incident related to the PTSI/PTSD our hope and goal is to have a departmental plan in place so as the firefighter suffering with PTSI/PTSD is viewed as a salvageable employee and not someone to be dealt with by discipline.

Ways to assist your members with this prior to anything going to discipline is number



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take advantages of training that is offered by the TSAFF and IAFF concerning this important topic. If you know your member is dealing with these types of issues and you do not have the resources in house, then reach out for help myself or your TSAFF DVP can assist you with those contacts. Once you have assisted your member in attaining the resource that they need, make sure you follow up with them. Make sure they know that their resource contact knows that these are occupational injuries and that the diagnosis of this is critical to the coverage by the workers compensation. We all need the assistance of others at one time or another and it is extremely important that we keep mental health a priority in the coming years.

If you a firefighter disciplined for any reason, please contact me as soon as possible so we can discuss the details surrounding the matter. If you suspect that the discipline was related to some action that is attributed to PTSD/PTSI and you need resources to help, please call me or any of our TSAFF DVPs who will be more than glad to get you the help your local member needs. Please do not wait to call for our assistance, we are here for you.



TSAFF Services Available to Affiliates

- Collective bargaining assistance
- Contract database information
- Assistance with grievances and disputes
- Union leadership education
- Assistance with health and safety issues
- Assistance with public relations
- Assistance with EMS-related issues
- Research and distribution of customized information
- Emergency defense funds



Our Mission: Serving Those Who Put Themselves In Harm's Way

No Restriction ~ No Exclusion Survivor Benefits designed to protect First Responders and their families.

The First Responder Task Force serves as the 'boots on the ground' for the Armed Forces Benefit Association (AFBA) and are the sole distribution channel bringing AFBA member benefits to your members. We proudly serve Locals nationally. On 9/11, when 343 Fire Fighters were killed in the line of duty, it shed light on the exclusions & restrictions buried in the fine print of many for-profit insurance policies. Families were denied or delayed payments due to exclusions such as "Acts of War", "Acts of Terror", "Hazardous Duty", and "Line of Duty." After 9/11, AFBA's survivor benefits were extended to include First Responders because they contain ZERO exclusions or restrictions.




\$5,000 LODD benefit / \$2,000 non-LODD benefit issued at NO COST to your Fire Fighters, the Local, or the Agency.

To learn more information about all of the resources available to your members & next steps to serving your members with the \$5,000 no-cost benefit, visit us here:

www.FRTF.us |  Scan here with your phone

*The \$5,000 survivor benefit is paid when a line of duty death occurs. Line of duty is defined as AFBA members who are Emergency Service Providers to include law enforcement, firefighters, and emergency medical services providers who are killed while involved in operations at or responding to/from the scene of an incident. If death occurs otherwise, outside of a suicide, the beneficiary will receive a \$2,000 benefit.



FirstResponderTaskForce.com
Follow "First Responder Task Force"
  



Proud Founders of FRBA
First Responder Benefit Association (FRBA) is our nonprofit founded to fill the gap of financial hardship that can often burden families of fallen First Responders. FRTF funds ALL administrative and operational expenses so that 100% of public donations go directly to aiding the families in need. Learn more at FRBA.org.

MDA Report

Rebuilding 'Fill the Boot'

Our goal is to grow Texas support to pre-pandemic levels, but we need your help!

Becky Prine

Please talk with your local about setting Fill the Boot dates for 2023 – we would love to add the entire TSAFF to the calendar. We are here to work with your local and MDA coordinator to get a successful Fill the Boot program going again in your community! We are thrilled to report we have 2023 Fill the Boots campaigns continuing to roll in and we look forward to adding your local to the list soon!

Please reach out and let us know if you have dates (even tentative), so we can work together to start the planning process for 2023. Thanks again for all that you do and we look forward to seeing everyone soon!

The Fill the Boot program is so critical to fund MDA's mission, to ensure that effective treatments and therapies are found for neuromuscular diseases. We need your help as we continue to rebuild our Fill the Boot program! We are beyond thrilled we already have many collection dates secured for 2022! If we have not already, we would absolutely love to add your local to the list!!

Because of the support of fire fighters, MDA has been able to fund research directly linked to FDA-approved therapies across multiple neuromuscular diseases. These therapies are life-changing for MDA families, giving them greater access to life's possibilities as they live longer and stronger. Funding has also helped MDA advance care through our National Care Center Network and provide much-needed community education, advocacy, recreation, support and connection. This would not have been possible without the support of the IAFF and fire fighters across the great state of Texas.

Research

Research is literally changing lives with the new drugs being approved to slow or stop disease progression. In the last seven years, 15 therapies for specific neuromuscular diseases have shown enough efficacy to win FDA approval, 4 new ones in 2021 alone.

Last fall, we were proud to announce the awarding of 18 new MDA grants totaling over \$1.6 million toward neuromuscular disease research. This round of grant funding reinforces



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Fire Fighter Partnerships
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TEXAS and MDA

- **14 MDA Care Centers, including 4 ALS Care Centers—**
 1. Baylor College of Medicine
 2. Central Texas Neurology Consultants
 3. Child Neurology Consultants of Austin
 4. Children's Hospital of San Antonio
 5. Children's Medical Center of Dallas
 6. Cook Children's Medical Center
 7. Dell Children's Medical Center
 8. Driscoll Children's Hospital
 9. Houston Methodist Neurological Institute (MDA/ALS)
 10. Methodist Neurology Associates
 11. Texas Children's Hospital
 12. Texas Neurology, P.A. (MDA/ALS)
 13. University of Texas Health Science Center (MDA/ALS)
 14. University of Texas, Southwestern (MDA/ALS)
- **\$900K+ Care Network Investment**
- **26,000+ Individuals Living with NMD**
- **\$1M+ in Active MDA Funded Research Projects—**
 - In myotonic dystrophy, ALS, and congenital myopathies
- **2 MDA Summer Camps—**
 1. Camp For All—Burton, TX 6/4/23-6/9/23
 2. Camp John Marc—Meridian, TX 6/18/23-6/23/23
- **1 MDA Family Camp Weekend—**
 - Camp Aranzazu—Rockport, TX Dates TBD

our unwavering commitment to the progress of neuromuscular disease research. The newly funded projects will aim to advance discoveries and therapy development in multiple areas including amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), Duchenne muscular dystrophy (DMD), spinal muscular atrophy (SMA), Charcot Marie Tooth disease (CMT) and myotonic dystrophy.

Welcome Gina Lansing

We are excited to share that our Fire Fighter Partnerships team is growing and we now have two people dedicated to the 11th District! Gina Lansing is back on the team – she is a familiar face to many of you, especially in North Texas.

It is because of partners like you, local Texas families affected by neuromuscular diseases have hope and the support they need. Every local that participates in Fill the Boot is making a difference for our MDA families. On behalf of these incredible families, thank you for your continued support!

Fill the Boot 2022

We hope your 2023 is going great! We have enjoyed spending time with several locals this spring at Fill the Boot collections and meetings across the state. Thank you for an incredible year in 2022 and for a strong start to 2023. The 11th District was the #1 fundraising district in the country in 2022! The great state of Texas raised \$1.1 million and the 11th District collectively raised over \$1.7 million dollars! Fill the Boot is undoubtedly bigger and better in the 11th! We are so grateful for your partnership and friendship – we work with the best in Texas!

Top 10 Fill the Boot Collections for 2022

Local	\$ Raised in 2022
Corpus Christi L936	\$127,638
Fort Worth L440	\$84,821
Midland L4405	\$80,348
Killeen L2505	\$75,863
Amarillo L542	\$55,101
Irving L2073	\$51,519
Bryan L1204	\$49,211
Wichita Falls L432	\$45,275
Arlington L1329	\$36,407
Denton L1291	\$29,830

Congratulations!

2023 TSAFF Scholarship Winners

Avery Lancaster, San Angelo L-886
Denny Burris Award Winner

- Ellason Felts, Fort Worth L-440
- Parker Glynn, Fort Worth L-440
- Ethan Gromacki, Arlington L-1329
- Catherine Heiner, Mesquite L-1518
- Burke Jones, San Antonio L-624
- Sarah McNulty, El Paso L-51
- Wyatt Smith, Fort Worth L-440
- Jailee Snodgrass, Port Arthur L-397
- Cooper Stone, Brownwood L-2863



The Texas Fire Fighters Emergency Relief and Scholarship Fund

www.tsaff.org

TAF PAC



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HURST L-4660 – Cody Lammons

LAKE TRAVIS L-4117 – Braden Frame

LAREDO L-872 – Albert Chapa

LUBBOCK L-972 – Jimmy Bacon, Todd Jordan, Jack Todd

MCALLEN L-2602 – Oscar Salinas

McKINNEY L-2661 – Steve Dorris

MISSION L-3609 – Leroy Garcia

ODESSA L-1665 – Tyler Houchin

PLANO L-2149 – Nathan Fisk, Wes Holland, Chris Lammons, Johnathan Lawson, Brad McCutcheon, Jaime Reyes, Chris Willits

PORT ARTHUR L-397 – Patrick McCorvy

TEXAS CITY L-1259 – Chris Martinez

WOODLANDS L-3846 – Erik Secrest, Richard Smith

PFFOK – Michael Korb

CAPITOL CLUB

AMARILLO L-542 – Ian Margrave

ARLINGTON L-1329 – James Studer

BURLESON L-4025 – Tanner Singleton

CONROE L-2731 – Bobby Allen, Phillip Johnson

GRAND PRAIRIE L-3255 – Jeff Baldwin

IRVING L-2073 – Brian Becker, Daniel Rozier

LUBBOCK L-972 – Barry Ross

MANSFIELD L-3599 – Trey Wells

McALLEN L-2602 – Oscar Salinas

MISSION L-3609 – Juan Villarreal

RED OAK L-4533 – Tanner Schlottman

WICHITA FALLS L-432 – Al Vitolo

PLATINUM

BEAUMONT L-399 – Brian Hebert, Louis Hebert

CONROE L-2731 – Cory Neitzel, Greg Nesom

FORT WORTH L-440 – Skyler Ainesworth, Alton Bostick, Clint Brewer, Mike Drivdahl, Kevin Fellers, Rob Gibson, Brian Kriss, Gill Lyddane, Alan McClain, Cary Patterson, Thad Raven, Zac Shaffer, Scott Streater, J.R. Sullivan, Ryan Zelazny

GRAND PRAIRIE L-3255 – Jason Farris

HOUSTON L-341 – Gabriel Dominguez

LEWISVILLE L-3606 – Joshua Friedrich

LUBBOCK L-972 – Mark Belcher, Wes Brendle, Chris Draper, Samuel Hohbein, Randy Lammons, Abi Morales

MARSHALL L-906 – Johnathan Wilson

McALLEN L-2602 – Hector Bourbois Jr.

MIDLAND L-4405 – Eric Stewart, KC Ward

MISSION L-3609 – Homer Salinas

PLANO L-2149 – Monte Allred, Mike Boatman, Nick Bottoms, Joshua Clouse, Richie Floyd, Laddin Gillespie, William Huth, Brian Ingram, Gerald Majka, Jeff Moberley, Chris Scheu, Jeremy Vandergriff, Brandon Whitney

TYLER L-883 – Hector Nunez

WOODLANDS L-3846 – Doug Adams, Stacy Hall, Paul Taylor

GOLD

AMARILLO L-542 – Derek Johnston

CONROE L-2731 – Matthew Barnes, Jake Booker, Dylan Casper, Clinton Ferrell, Matt Francis, Michael Genovesi, Marco Guillen, Joshua Hamilton, Adam Hunsaker, Kevin King, Cody LeCroy, Michael Margraff, Trevor Mathis, Caleb Meyer, Joe Miller, Gordon Mizrany, Esteban Montoya, Chase Morgan, Ryan Mullinax, Kevin Murphy, Blaine Pyles, Jakob Robinson, Anthony Romeo, Phillip Roy, Zachary Simmons, Kevin Smith, Steven Suarez, Jason Tucker, John Turner, Ryan Vanden Hul

COPPELL L-3178 – Matthew Uppole

DENTON L-1291 – Ken Gold

FORT WORTH L-440 - Benjamin Brackett, Joe Crawford, Caleb Crow, Richard Harrison, Kurt Howard, Tim Johns, Donald Johnson, William MacQueenette, Laterrance Majors, Ronald Mills, Andre Milton, Jason Myers, Ray Russell, Jerry Stafford, Landon Stallings, Pat Vasquez, Mike Walters, Chad Ward, Don Westmoreland

GARLAND L-1293 - Bradyn Bright, Wesley Brown, David Caldwell, Colton Carson, Jerry Click, Alec Cooksey, Donald Dale, Stephen Gullede, Tyler Little, Chad Purcell, Donald Waddle

LUBBOCK L-972 - Dillon Allison, Blake Ball, Matt Bennett, Travis Bouffard, Dustin Brown, Ryan Davis, Michael Eberle, Brian Faz, Michael Fraga, Richard Garcia, Wade Gipson, Kevin Goldston, Phillip Grandon, Zane Grothusen, Preston Hammonds, Gordon Haynes, Cade Holt, David House, Kevin Ivy, Coy Johnson, Lyle Jones, Collin Kattner, Perry Killman, John Kruczek, Brandon Losolla-Stafford, Stephen Marquez, Daniel Moser, Ian Mounce, Charlie Neely, Justin Ochoa, Shane Parker, Kaleb Pounds, Bradon Ross, David Singletary, Christopher Smith, Justin Smith, Ronnie Tyson, Keegan Voos, Jeff Webb, Stacy Whorton, Ryan Wied, Nick Wilson

ORANGE L-1432 - Gregory Gravett

PFLUGERVILLE L-4137 - Michael Anderson, Sean Dreas, Chris Jones, David Kilventon, Adam Tabor

PLANO L-2149 - Patrick Amoroso, John Barrett, Troy Berry, Anthony DiMarco, James Harris, Nicholas Kalina, Clayton Lane, Chris Larue, Chris Mougia, Josh Pitcox, Michael Reed, Mathew Sutphin, Brandon Williams

SILVER

ARLINGTON L-1329 - Jayson Wittmayer

BROWNSVILLE L-970 - Joseph Huerta

CONROE L-2731 - Joseph Maddox, Ryan Shely, Casey Thompson, Bryce Zachary

FORT WORTH L-440 - Craig Bope, William Cadman, Jeff Dewitt, Steve Walker, Jerry Webb

GARLAND L-1293 - Robert Madsen

LUBBOCK L-972 - Thomas Alonzo, Jason Bobo, Cody Buck, Cory Buck, Jeremiah Edwards, Daniel Garvin, Blake Gibson, Tony Guerrero, Shane Hudson, Jason Jaquess, Chris McAllister, Cory McLaurin, Samuel Meyer, Jacob Michaels, Zachary Mize, Ricky Murphy, Steven Nelson, Michael Parkinson, Dustin Provence, Kurt Sparks

MISSION L-3609 - Jorge Balderas

PFLUGERVILLE L-4137 - Brian Lucas, Rob McGrew, Tim Moellenberg, Danny Timmons

PLANO L-2149 - Jeremy Engel

BRONZE

ARLINGTON L-1329 - Ariel Ayerdis, Javier Benitez, Luke Burgdorf, Caleb Cabellero, David Christie, Shawn Corder, Juan Cruz, Max Duncan, Tim Fortner, Nikolaus Gates, Todd Gittins, Shawn Graham, Eric Gray, Mikle Hartz, Carter Hawk, Juan Herrera, Scott Hofstrom, Jason Horne, David Humphreys, Jody Keeler, Davon Landers, Kevin Leverette, Joseph Markham, Edward Montague, Andy Neylon, Adam Osicka, Jacob Parnell, Jonathan Patten, Christopher Prendergast, Cameron Pullar-Knight, Sergio Rivas, Justin Robinson, Samuel Rochin, Adrian Rojas, Gustavo Salcido, Tyler Sassar, James Thompson, Nathan Toland, Rowdy Vaquera, Adrian Velasquez, Tyler Walker, Zachary Waters, Brady Weaver, Colton Williams, Ronald Wright

BROWNSVILLE L-970 - Mario Guerrero

CONROE L-2731 - Richard Balboa, Michael Barker, Tyler Becker, Tyler Becker, Dawson Boatman, Clinton Brochtrup, Charles Bruner, Ryan Burkhalter, James Conlee, Stephen Cottar, Kain Dodd, Lane Fajkus, Branden Ferrell, Daniel Foster, Thomas Garvey, Justin Hammond, Joshua Johnson, Gregory Kasberg, Brockton King, Stephen Kolb, Thomas Maiden, Dustin McDonald, Richard McNiece, Chad Merilat, Tyler Meyer, Nate Mierzwa, Robert Paben, Matthew Perkins, Dakota Savacool, Dane Schwarz, Donald Staton, Josh Templeton, Robert Woolery

FORT WORTH L-440 - Jerry Bays, Tony Blythe, David Booker, Mark Davidson, Brad Fowler, Michael James, Joe Jones, Nick McDowell, Kyle Short, James White

GARLAND L-1293 - Jared Head, Cody Ray, Jeff Treece,

LUBBOCK L-972 - Chase Addington, Angelica Aldape, Kyle Bailey, Lance Baker, Dexter Baker, Adam Baker, Aaron Banks, Chris Banks, Trevor Barker, Derek Bilberry, Aaron Blanco, Reece Brazil, Joshua Burkett, Chad Burnett, Matt Caldwell, Brandon Caldwell, Chyla Carey, Jerry Castro, Casey Chance, Jeffrey Clark, Patrick Cockerell, Robert Cope, Benjamin Cothran, Wesley Crumpler, Kasey Davis, Jackie Dufek, Tanner Ezell, Doug Flanigan, Brannon Foerster, Eric Fransen, Christopher Garza, Matthew Gass, Colton Glenn, Jeremy Goodlett, Brian Gross, Russell Hale, Trevor Hall, Lance Hamilton, Tyler Harendt, Shawn Harris, Patrick Hart, Jason Henry, Chris Hernandez, Daniel Holdman, Brad Jones, Lee Jones, Michael Jones, Kris Kelly, Chandler Kenady, Jarrod King, Justin Koontz, Marvin Laxson, Joey Lenox, Brad Long, Jase Loveless, Lane Luna, Eric Mahan, Walker McKinnon, Jason Meurer, Michael Mills, David Mooney, Cody Nelson, Chris Norman, Lee Oles, Dustin Oliver, Christopher Osborne, Mario Parras, Joshua Patterson, Cory Powell, Brady Rasco, Benjamin Reed, Josh Rowin, Jimmy Scott, Evan Scrivner, Ryan Seales, Nathaniel Sells, Dusty Settle, Dillon Shaw, Clayton Shaw, Todd Simants, Doug Smith, Jarrod Sweetman, Curt Sydow, Jonathan Tunnell, Charlie Turner, Gary Vaughn, Kevin Vaughn, Trace Vaughn, Monte Vineyard, Joseph Wallace, Jordan Weaver, Mark Westfall, Jeremy Whitefield, Caleb Wischkaemper, Paul Woodruff, Larry Wright, Shannon Zant

PFLUGERVILLE L-4137 - Alejandro Piedrahita

PLANO L-2149 - Samuel McDonald, Matthew Nichter, Ronald Simmons, Brian Trammell

ROCKWALL L-5057 - Michael Caffey

TAFPAC MEMBER

CONROE L-2731 - Richard Balboa, Michael Barker, Clinton Brochtrup, Stephen Cottar, Branden Ferrell, Daniel Foster, Gregory Kasberg, Stephen Kolb, Thomas Maiden, Dustin McDonald, Tyler Meyer, Nate Mierzwa, Robert Paben, Dakota Savacool

LUBBOCK L-972 - Landry Brown, Chad Crump, Jake McCain

PFLUGERVILLE L-4137 - Treavor Stokes

TRIPLE PLAY

ARLINGTON L-1329

CONROE L-2731

FORT WORTH L-440

MCALLEN L-2602



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TAFPAC is the political action committee for the Texas State Association of Fire Fighters. We work with candidates and incumbents across the political spectrum – Republicans, Democrats and Independents.

Because no union dues ever go to political activity, we must stay politically active throughout Texas through TAFPAC. As long as elected officials and their appointees control the funding, regulation and management of the fire service, we must have a seat at the table – from city hall to the state capitol.

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3rd Quarter 2022 | www.TSAFF.org

PARAMEDIC

EMS 2022

*PERSPECTIVES FROM
AROUND THE STATE*

Page 13



The Texas Fire Fighter Magazine

Editor - Brandon Day

Assistant Editor - Cindy Gonzales

Communications Director - Erin Powers

Produced by:

Texas State Association of Fire Fighters

1106 Lavaca Street, Suite 100

Austin, Texas 78701

(512) 326-5050

Cover photo credit: dan_prat

Baytown L-1173 recently hosted Fire Ops 101 for elected officials, political staffers and other guests. Participants received updates on fire service issues from L-1173 President Dallas Webb, TSAFF President John Riddle, TSAFF 4th District Vice President Mark Medrano, IAFF 11th District Vice President Sandy McGhee, and Baytown Fire Chief Kenneth Dobson.



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Rafael Torres, IAFF District Service Representative

Carlos Torres, Retired Fire Fighters President

Dean Gutierrez, Retired Fire Fighters Secretary / Treasurer

Special Appointments

TLFFRA Liaison - Albert Chapa

TMRS Liaison - David Riggs

District Legislative Agents - Lloyd Sandefer, Tyler Houchin,

Mike Jones, Brad McCutcheon, Mike Silva, Jack Todd,

Jonathan Wilson, Joaquin Criner

District Field Service Representatives - Matthew Baker,

Marc Clifford, Leo Mendoza, Trey Wells, Scott Robertson

Health and Safety Committee - James Younger (chair),

Scott Robertson, Leo Mendoza, Daniel Buford, Chris Conner,

Luke Manion

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Texas Fire Fighter | Qtr 3, 2022

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or email her at **ARushing @FireFirstCU.org**.

From the President

Our Political March Goes On

President

John Riddle

While the years that the Texas Legislature is in session are important to our success in securing the rights and benefits of our members, election years are equally important. Our success during legislative sessions is dependent on who we send to the legislature.

With the Texas primary and runoff elections behind us, we still have work left to do in the summer and fall. But here's how we fared in the primaries: the TSAFF endorsed in 93 state senate and state representative races. Of those races, we won 78, lost two and had 13 runoff elections and won nine of the 13. That gives us 87 wins and six losses – or a 94 percent success rate in recent elections. That is an impressive record and I would like to personally thank all of our staff and members around the state that put in the time and the hard work to make that happen. We also still have the general election coming up in November and the TSAFF will be evaluating candidates and making endorsements for the general election as well.

Please remember that the TSAFF is a non-partisan organization. We support those that support us, regardless of their party affiliation. In keeping with this non-partisan approach, of the 93 primary races that we endorsed in, 63 were Republican candidates and 30 Democrat candidates. We also follow a friendly incumbent rule and the majority of our endorsed candidates are incumbents that have a proven and positive track record of firefighter support.

The effectiveness of this non-partisan approach is evident by the success that we have had in the Texas Legislative sessions. During the last three legislative sessions, we have been able to help pass legislation making

post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) a compensable injury under workers compensation.

We've also passed legislation on major workers compensation reform, improvements to the PTSD benefit and increases and improvements to the line-of-duty death (LODD) benefit. We've passed legislation waiving tuition at state universities for permanently disabled firefighters.

“TSAFF endorsed 93 Republicans and Democrats in legislative primary races. Our candidates won 94 percent of those races.”

In the last legislative session, we were able to pass legislation on Covid presumption and a quarantine bill that requires any costs associated with an employer required quarantine to be borne by the employer. It also prohibits the employer from docking the pay and benefits of the firefighter in relation to such quarantine. We passed legislation guaranteeing the right of our retiring ESD members to purchase health insurance through their employer's health plan. We have also been successful in all of these legislative sessions in killing bad legislation, such as dues checkoff and others, that have a negative impact on our members.

We understand and respect that there are many factors that you consider in making your political choices. For the TSAFF, the only factor that is considered in our endorsement



John Riddle
President

39 W. Victoria Drive
Montgomery, TX 77356
Cell: (936) 537-0727
E-mail: jriddle@tsaff.org

process is where the candidate stands on firefighter issues.

Every January, of even numbered years, the TSAFF holds a legislative convention. At this convention, delegates determine the legislative agenda for the TSAFF going into the next Texas legislative session. A TSAFF endorsement simply informs our members, that this is the candidate that we believe gives us the best opportunity to move our firefighter's agenda forward in the next legislative session.

One of the main purposes of our state association is to protect the rights and benefits and the health and safety of our members – and to improve upon those rights and benefits and health and safety when we can. The fact of the matter is, in order to fulfill that purpose, we must stay in the political game.

In closing, I can assure you that the TSAFF will maintain a non-partisan approach to our endorsement process and those endorsements will be based solely on firefighter issue and no other factor. You can also rest assured that your state association is and will forever be committed to protecting and improving the rights, benefits and health and safety of Texas' professional firefighters.

Stay safe.

From the Editor / Secretary-Treasurer

Where Do Your TSAFF Dues Go?

Secretary/Treasurer and Editor of the Texas Fire Fighter
Brandon Day

Earlier this year, I was honored to teach Secretary/Treasurer classes at the IAFF ALTS in Orlando, Florida. While there, I attended an information session presented by IAFF General Secretary-Treasurer Frank Lima. His presentation broke down details of how IAFF dues are spent. Within TSAFF, we look at these issues almost daily, but GST Lima reminded me that a Texas version of the presentation would make good sense too. With that in mind, this article is intended to help you take a closer look at how your \$9.95 monthly TSAFF dues are spent.

As you probably are aware, TSAFF dues have risen significantly over the last three state conventions or six years. This was very much needed to further strengthen the programs the TSAFF offers. We have made major

investments in our political/legislative, service and communications programs. Because of your commitment, we're supporting more of our 190 affiliates around the state than ever before – on the ground and at the state capitol.

With the budget, I will start with the biggest percentage, 29.7 percent, or \$2.95, of your dues that goes to our legislative program. This shows that our biggest investment is politics. You have often heard that everything we have is influenced by politics. This is the arena that is most important to us. We must continue to fight for (or protect) firefighters' rights, benefits and workplace safety. This line covers our legislative director, deputy legislative director, legislative events (Fire Fighter Day at the capitol and our legislative convention), the district legislative program, and other



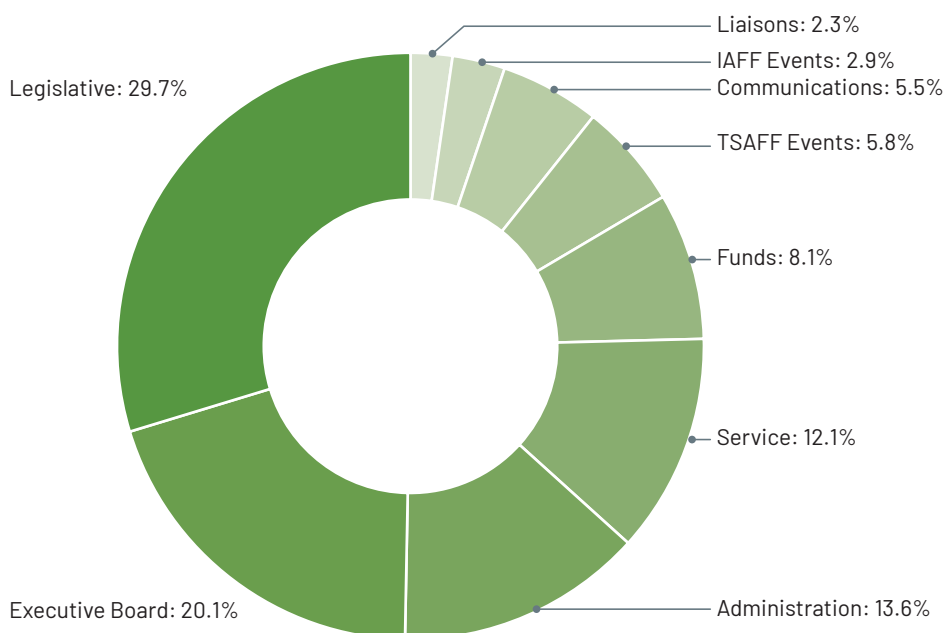
Brandon Day
Secretary/Treasurer and
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E-mail: bday@tsaff.org

legislative expenses. An important point: no member dues go to political action or campaign contributions. That activity occurs within our political action committee (PAC).

The next largest expense comes in the executive board line. This line counts for 20.1 percent, or \$1.99, of our budget. This covers salaries for our president, secretary/treasurer and the six district vice presidents as well the costs of working and traveling in our districts and around the state. This line also accounts for our involvement in affiliate organizations such as the Federation of State and Provincial Fire Fighters where we meet twice annually to discuss goals and strategies in other states and share solutions for common challenges. This helps us, for example, cooperate with other states to refine tactics for pushing good legislation and fighting bad legislation.

From here we move to our administration line which is 13.6 percent or \$1.36. This line covers our office rental, office expenses, and office staff as well as professional services such as CPA. This line has gone up since our move to the AFL-CIO building. This was a much-needed move as it is allowing us to be

Per Capita Breakdown



From the Editor / Secretary-Treasurer

(continued)

within walking distance of the most important place to us, the Texas Capitol.

Service is where we move to next. This part of the budget accounts for 12.1 percent, or \$1.20, of your dues. Here we find the salary for our service director, our legal fund, and service expense line to cover our district field service representative (DFSR) program as well as travel and related expenses for our service program. Our service program provides options for affiliate locals to get assistance with grievance issues, negotiating contracts and other issues. It also provides a way for Locals to get information on what legal resources are available through our staff and general counsel and to get guidance on Chapter 143 and other state government codes

Other budget line items that account for 8.1 percent, or 80 cents, include the emergency defense fund, Rotary House Fund for cancer treatment temporary housing, the IAFF District 11 Benevolent Fund, and our donation to

the Warrior Institute.

The TSAFF Events expenditures total 5.8 percent, or 58 cents. This covers TSAFF biennial convention, executive board meetings, statewide training events (service training and leadership seminar), District Training, communications classes and secretary/treasurer training), trustee meetings, and contribution to the TSAFF.

Communications budget items come in next with 5.5 percent, or 55 cents. This area of the budget covers our communications director's salary for our provision of communications support to locals around the state and our social media outreach, internal communications such as TEXAS FIRE FIGHTER, and news media relations.

IAFF event expenditures total 2.9 percent, or 29 cents, and they cover travel and event costs for TSAFF executive board or other IAFF District 11 activities including attendance of IAFF ALTS, IAFF Redmond and the IAFF

legislative conference. This also funds our delegates and alternates from the TSAFF to attend the IAFF convention.

Finally, rounding out your dues is Liaisons which is 2.3 percent, or 23 cents. This portion is what allows for TSAFF representation to TMRS, TLFRA, NFPA, TCFP as well as funding for our chaplain and health and safety committee.

Another important point: all TSAFF expenditures are reviewed by our staff and by your elected trustees. I'm proud that we have a dedicated working group committed to ensuring that we remain good stewards of your dues and that we make the most of what we have.

I realize this is a lot of information, but my hope is that you find it informative. The majority of these expenses are dictated by convention action over the life of the TSAFF. Of course, if you have any questions or want to discuss this further, please feel free to reach out to me or your DVP.

Preserve the Past



Please help ensure that the extraordinary work of TSAFF firefighters is included in our history.

We seek recent and historical fire and EMS incident photos and video for display at TSAFF events and the 2023 state association convention.

We will ensure original materials are handled carefully, credited if used, and returned. An FTP link to conveniently upload videos and photos is available.

If you can help or have questions, please contact us at your convenience.

Photo Credit:
Glen Ellman / FWFD
and Fort Worth L-440



Q&A with TSAFF's Rafael Torres

TEXAS FIRE FIGHTER will periodically profile TSAFF officers, board members, staff appointees, and members. This issue features Rafael Torres, our service director.



↑ Rafael Torres, TSAFF Service Director

What's your background, length of service in the El Paso Fire Department and the TSAFF?

I served with the El Paso Fire Department for 25 years and as Local 51 president for 10 years. I was involved with bargaining in El Paso from 1982. I had the opportunity to be mentored by Louis Hebert, the extraordinary labor leader from Beaumont, and former IAFF 11th District Vice President Buddy Mass during bargaining sessions for our local. We also had Mike Higgins, the late TSAFF legislative director, as our advocate when our local filed and won the grievance that affords El Paso fire fighters disciplinary representation. I retired as a fire fighter in 2004 and came to work as service director for TSAFF that same year. Earlier this year, I started my 18th year with the TSAFF.

What were some highlights of your service in El Paso?

Highlights were, by far, learning how to interact with other firefighters and building that trust within our tight-knit profession. I also enjoyed being a certified fitness coordinator, CISD peer team member, and spending many days and nights on the Franklin Mountains being a team leader for the EPFD combined search and rescue team (COMSAR).

Describe your TSAFF responsibilities.

I serve the members of the TSAFF in bargaining, grievance processing and grievance hearings as well as disciplinary appeals and instructing on many disciplines. My responsibilities to the members of the TSAFF are varied, but circulate around statutory application / interpretation / explanation, legal opinions, assisting with filing grievances, assisting with disciplinary appeals non-civil service and civil service as well as instructing during the Louis Hebert Leadership Seminar. I also assist locals with collective and meet and confer negotiations. Included in the teaching arena I have been responsible for the TSAFF Service Training program in the fall.

I also spend a good amount of time fielding phone calls from our affiliate presidents and secretary/treasurers and our TSAFF district vice presidents as well as Zoom conference training. When requested, I put on customized classes for our locals.

How would describe the evolution of the TSAFF since you started?

To give a good understanding of my knowledge of the TSAFF, I have to start with one of our local presidents, Gene Adams, who himself was TSAFF president for 10 years. Larry Keith was TSAFF president in the 1990s and had continued the grassroots movement of visiting locals and recruiting new members when I first was president of El Paso L-51. When I was hired by the executive board in 2004, Guy Turner was president in for the TSAFF. They had just voted to go from three to five districts. Our membership was around 12,000 and growing. Our state association had a good political program, but it improved from 2007 to present. The service area of our state association has always been the center of my attention. Having been a local union president, I know how important it is to have a resource that you can depend on when faced with unknown situations. Our training has expanded to include bargaining skills and process as well as working through a disciplinary appeal process. Labor-management and alternative dispute resolution (getting to yes) has been at the center of our instructions in most service areas.

What do you like about the TSAFF?

I have always liked the fact that the TSAFF has always been a firefighter-first organization and has always expended resources to help its members trying to anticipate what they need the most.

Torres Q&A

(continued)

What trends are you seeing around the state in your work?

For the last two to three years, there's a trend in fire departments trying to force their off-duty firefighters to come back to work while off duty to fill in for overtime call back. Unfortunately, a few departments have tried to discipline firefighters for not answering this call and it appears to only be getting worse. The off time for our firefighters is intended for them to rest and recover. This, coupled with increases in PTSD occurrences, is becoming more prevalent around the state.

What are the most important issues facing fire fighters in Texas?

Right now, a prominent issue facing firefighters is whatever the local's issues are in their hometown at the moment they call me. Statewide, I would have to say "fair representation" or "due process" in a right to work state. There have been many more ESDs (emergency service districts) emerge and develop over my 18 years of service and as of now they can only try and acquire collective bargaining to give their members a property right to their jobs.

What are your personal interests, charitable activities?

I cherish spending time with family and friends. I've always been taught that we are placed on this planet to help our fellow humans, so helping others is part of my makeup.

I've served as president of GRTU- Texas Chapter of Trout Unlimited, a national cold water conservation group. I currently serve as a coordinator for Reel Recovery, a men's cancer organization that holds fly fishing retreats for men all over Texas at no cost to the participants. Most that know me also know that I have chased a few trout with a fly rod and spent time backpacking through the wilderness.

Anything else TSAFF members should know?

I have always enjoyed my work and will keep you updated with the latest trends that affect firefighter and their workplace. I remain an advocate for members filing line-of-duty injury claims with workers comp, including PTSD and cancer. I have said from the beginning of my time with the TSAFF, I know that the next service director or directors are out in our membership attending our training sessions like I did back in 1996. What I started learning in that class still helps me help our members on a daily basis. For that reason, I hope to see many of you in September for our 2022 service training.



Calendar of Upcoming Events

Dates of events are subject to change.

- **TSAFF Service Training**
San Marcos, TX
Sept. 6-9, 2022
- **TSAFF Political Training Academy**
San Marcos, TX
Sept. 6-9, 2022
- **IAFF Fallen Fire Fighter Memorial**
Colorado Springs, CO
Sept. 17, 2022
- **TSAFF Quarterly Meeting**
Austin, TX
Sept. 27, 2022
- **TSAFF Workers' Comp Class**
New Braunfels, TX
Dec. 6, 2022
- **TSAFF Secretary-Treasurer Workshop**
New Braunfels, TX
Dec. 7-8, 2022

Congratulations!

2022 TSAFF Scholarship Winners

Lukas Rogers, Fort Worth L-440
Denny Burris Award Winner

Andrew Smith, Fort Worth L-440
Garret Bruce, Red Oak L-4533
Tyler Paige, Garland L-1293
Caleb Roberts, Baytown L-1173

Kaley Leatherwood, Fort Worth L-440
Makenna Albert, San Antonio L-624
Alyssa Howard, Fort Worth L-440
Mattie Sanford, San Angelo L-886
Jillian Kirkley, Fort Worth L-440



The Texas Fire Fighters Emergency Relief and Scholarship Fund

A Winning 2022 Election Season

In dozens of local, county and state races, Texas fire fighters made political gains

So far in 2022, TSAFF and our affiliates have endorsed more than 90 Republican and Democratic legislative primary candidates, and dozens more candidates in local races. TSAFF leaders and political, legislative and communications staff, along with political consultant Mike Stevens of Action Data, have provided support throughout the state. Some of the highlights of this year's election campaigns to date include:

Lubbock L-972 Elects Mayor, City Council Slate

Lubbock firefighters supported and helped elect a new mayor and three pro-public safety city council candidates – Christi Martinez, Mark McBrayer and Jennifer Wilson.

The four races required strong grassroots efforts by firefighters and PAC support to defeat an entrenched incumbent.

"This election epitomizes teamwork," L-972 President Joseph Wallace said. "We needed a change at city hall, and our members, our great candidates and the community worked to make it happen."

In the mayoral race, Tray Payne leveraged a large early voting lead and a strong election day to defeat four other candidates. He won with 67 percent of the vote.

In the council races, Wilson won without a runoff with 53 percent of the vote in a five-candidate field, McBrayer kept two prospective candidates out of the race, and Martinez overcame redistricting disadvantages to capture a council seat with 66 percent of the vote.

Wilson, a respected local pediatrician, is the wife of L-972 member Nick Wilson.

Wallace said, "Firefighters can effectively recruit and support strong candidates that care about or are willing to learn about – and fight for – the fire service and public safety. We appreciated the opportunity to bring about political change in Lubbock."

With multiple rounds of block walking, social media and direct mail outreach, firefighters focused on 6,500 voter homes – and



→ Dr. Jennifer Wilson, shown with L-972 member Jack Todd, won a five-way race for a Lubbock City Council seat.



increased turnout by 1,500 votes compared to recent elections.

L-972 relied on support from the state association and Stevens, Wallace said.

"The increased voter turnout enabled our slate of candidates to win without runoffs," he said. "That was part of a strong plan that our members helped execute very well."

Longview L-4331 Wins Prop A Pension Fund Vote

Longview L-4331 firefighters led support for Proposition A which passed with 59 percent of the vote. Voters approved a bond issuance of \$45.6 million to address unfunded liability of the Longview Fireman's Relief & Retirement Fund.

Longview firefighters have been working on decreasing fund liability by increasing contributions, decreasing benefits, and creating a tiered benefit for employees hired after Jan. 1, 2016. L-4331 member contributions accounted for more than 95 percent of the benefits earned. With the passage of the proposition,

the City of Longview is also addressing the liability by increasing its contributions.

Forney L-4326 Wins Collective Bargaining

Forney firefighters passed a collective bargaining referendum – with strong support from a conservative Republican voting block comprised of about 80 percent of area voters. Using a multi-channel communications campaign and strong voter outreach, firefighters earned the support of a local member of Congress and a state representative. The win for Forney firefighters was set up in May 2021 by the unseating of a longtime mayor and the election of two pro-public safety city council members. A constructive rapport with the new city manager also helped put firefighters on the right track for referendum support in the community.

Election Season

(continued)

Burleson L-4025 Win Bond Election, Fire-Based EMS

Burleson L-4025 lent strong support to a \$52.3 million local bond election to fund public safety facilities improvements by overcoming a seven-point deficit in an early survey.

Firefighters helped ensure the fire service would be strengthened – with direct mail outreach that elected officials credited in discussing the 25-vote victory margin.

The bond election win followed the firefighters' multi-year campaign to support fire-based EMS in the community. On Jan. 18, 2022, the Burleson City Council voted unanimously for fire-based EMS which will begin on October 1, 2023.

L-4025 President Mike Jones said, "Our Association continues to work closely with the fire administration in supporting efforts to make Burleson a safer community. These were big wins."

Other Races

- **Arlington L-1329** helped Long Pham win a runoff race for city council. Firefighters provided social media, text and email support, phone banking and direct mail in support of the campaign which won 57 percent of the votes...
- With TSAFF PAC support, firefighters helped Texas Rep. Kyle Kacal fend off a primary challenge and win in a runoff in House District 12. Firefighters, including from **Bryan L-1204**, helped generate more votes in Brazos, McLennan, Falls, Limestone and Robertson Counties...
- **Lewisville L-3606** and Denton L-1291 helped Richard Hayes win 57 percent of the vote a three-way HD 57 race in the newly created district and avoid a runoff.
- **Wichita Falls L-432** defeated an anti-firefighter candidate in the county judge primary race to help Jim Johnson win 57

percent of the vote and the Republican nomination in a race that has no November opponent. Firefighters also worked to help Michael L. Smith get elected to city council.

- **McKinney L-2661** worked to support Patrick Cloutier as he won 58 percent of the vote in a special runoff race to fill a vacated city council position...
- **Carrollton L-2182** supported mayoral candidate Steve Babick and city council candidate Christopher Axberg with social media, text and email outreach, phone banking and direct mail activity...
- **Irving L-2073** endorsed city council candidate Kyle Taylor (won with 54 percent), lending social media, text, direct mail and email support, and in-person phone calls.

Concert Safety Task Force Reports Findings

TSAFF President John Riddle thanked Gov. Greg Abbott for including TSAFF on the Texas Task Force on Concert Safety (TFCS).

The task force was formed after a crowd surge caused multiple fatalities and serious injuries at the Astroworld Festival in Houston in November 2021. Houston L-341 firefighters responded to the incident and cited safety

concerns.

"While some level of risk is inherent in any mass gathering, it is the opinion of the TFCS that proper planning will allow Texans to enjoy safe performances, concerts, and other culturally significant events," according to the report.

Key findings of the task force report include recommendations to improve unified

on-site command and control, permitting, training, planning with risk assessment, and centralized resources.

"Like the governor," Riddle said, "I am hopeful that the task force's work will help prevent catastrophic safety failures like those at the Astroworld Festival. We appreciate the service on the committee of our appointed representative, Marty Lancton of Houston."

Plano L-2149's Simpson Joins 3FTL Board

3FTL is a comprehensive mental health treatment team providing support, guidance, and accountability for first responders.

We exist to save the lives of those who save us. 3FTL programs or created and customized to help first responders heal from acute and delayed stress, anxiety, depression, grief, post-traumatic stress, substance abuse, and suicidal ideation.

Simpson said, "I am not only a supporter of this great organization, I am a client. 3FTL was there for me in my time of need."

3FTL Co-Founder and President Jennifer

Halley said, "From the very beginning of 3FTL, this one has been on board in every capacity, answering dumb workers' comp questions, city policy explanations... all while answering with sarcasm and wit. When he 'asked for a friend' about mental health, we walked with him through his journey toward a better. Personally, he challenges me to be better so that I can be the best I can be for 3FTL."

WE
ARE **190**
IAFF Locals

SERVING **Fire**
18,000 Fighters

PROTECTING
29 Million
Texas Citizens



HERE'S HOW WE SUPPORT TEXAS FIRE FIGHTERS

- Education / Training
- Political Action / Government Affairs
- Bargaining and Negotiations
- Grievances and Arbitrations
- Occupational Health and Safety
- Financial Assistance
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FEATURE

EMS 2022

TEXAS FIRE FIGHTER asked a group of TSAFF-affiliate fire fighter / paramedics for their perspectives on the current state of EMS in Texas. These opinions are personal and do not reflect the positions of their fire-department employers.



Kim Phillips

Houston L-341,
Paramedic / District Chief, 20 years



David Dunafan Jr

Irving L-2053
Firefighter/E0/Paramedic, 21 years



Rashell Rodgers

Beaumont L-399
Paramedic / Field Training Officer /
EMS Steward, seven years



Carlissa Reyna

Mission L-3609
Firefighter / Paramedic, 14 years in EMS,
3 years Mission FD



Jacob Barkham

DeSoto L-2965
Firefighter/Paramedic, 10 years



Steve Bowers

Corpus Christi L-936
Firefighter II / Paramedic, 34 years



Derek Johnston

Amarillo L-542
Firefighter / Paramedic / Flight Nurse,
11 years



Dustin Nash

Bryan L-1204,
Firefighter/Paramedic FT0, 9 years



How many EMS runs do you make, on average, in a shift?

PHILLIPS: In Houston, with 94 stations, it varies from several per shift to upwards of 20 per shift.

DUNAFAN: Five calls per shift in Irving.

RODGERS: The city runs five to six units per shift with an average of 10 to 15 calls per unit.

REYNA: Fire-based EMS is new to Mission this year.

BARKHAM: Eight to 15 runs per shift in DeSoto.

BOWERS: I am assigned to one of our lower-volume stations in Corpus Christi. We average approximately eight to 12 calls per shift.

JOHNSTON: On any given shift in Amarillo, we usually respond to approximately four to eight EMS calls.

NASH: In Bryan, I typically make five to seven runs per shift.



How many EMS runs does your department make annually?

PHILLIPS: In Houston, a day usually just eclipses 1,000 runs with 80 to 85 percent of those being EMS calls – so, around 300,000 EMS runs per year.

DUNAFAN: Approximately 25,000 in Irving.

RODGERS: In 2021, Beaumont ran approximately 20,000, with 12,000 of those runs combining both fire and EMS responses. As of May 18, 2022, there have been 7,000 runs made.

REYNA: Fire-based EMS is new this year to Mission.

BARKHAM: About 8,200 in DeSoto.

BOWERS: Approximately 52,000 to 55,000 EMS runs in Corpus Christi.

JOHNSTON: Amarillo responds to approximately 15,000 EMS calls.

NASH: About 12,500 per year in Bryan.



What advantages does fire-based EMS provide your community?

PHILLIPS: I feel our citizens and community receive immediate comprehensive emergency care no matter what apparatus shows up first. The constant revolution of EMS providers – from ambulance to heavy apparatus – means skills and resource knowledge are kept fresh and relevant.

DUNAFAN: It means quicker response times to have one paramedic on every piece of fire equipment and two paramedics on every medical intensive care unit (MICU).

RODGERS: An advantage is the ability to have increased staffing to respond to critical calls when there are no units available. The ability to staff med units with credentialed firefighters when

there is a shortage of divisional paramedics or to upstaff to make additional med units to help decrease runs per med unit, thereby providing better coverage for the community.

REYNA: Prior to COVID, our department did not provide EMS services to the community. That unfortunate crisis created a need for us to begin fire-based service to provide highest quality service. With the correct management, command and supervisor roles filled, EMS runs more efficiently from the fire service. Firefighter/ Paramedics and Firefighter EMT also help improve cities' ISO ratings. Communities are better protected than with private services that tend to provide other services such as transfers which take units from service to generate revenue for the companies.

BARKHAM: Fire-based EMS, in my opinion, is more about patient care and acting in the best interests of the city. Private EMS seems to be more about the dollars such as transfers versus 911 calls because there is money in transfers.

BOWERS: There are several advantages: 1) strategically placed units for quick response, 2) career-minded EMS personnel that are highly trained in numerous areas – Fire; EMS; Rescue; HazMat; Incident Command, etc., and 3) cohesive partnership with their fire-based counterparts.

JOHNSTON: Fire-based EMS provides several different advantages in Amarillo. First, we have made several of our front-line trucks ALS capable, to include narcotics. If our transport agency is inundated with calls, we can manage a patient at the critical-care level on scene while waiting for transport. Second, being spread out strategically over the city allows for quicker response times which is an absolute priority in medical emergencies.

NASH: I believe the citizens appreciate seeing their tax dollars providing both fire and EMS services, a better level of care.

Q What are the best aspects of being a firefighter and a pre-hospital clinician?

PHILLIPS: Much of the assistance we provide citizens, whether from a fire truck or an ambulance, is from a health care provider's perspective. Rescues from rising water save lives as well as pre-hospital emergency cardiac care. When you have both systems working closely together, I strongly believe you have the best of both worlds in the realm of mitigation of the emergency and provision of emergency care.

DUNAFAN: The community support matters, and we have a career that is rewarding.

RODGERS: While I am not a firefighter, the best aspects of being a pre-hospital clinician is having the knowledge and ability to make changes in someone else's life. It could be as simple as educating a patient on their illness, the side effects of a medication that they have just been prescribed and when best to take it, or providing medical interventions in an emergent patient while watching your treatment provide stabilization and legitimately saving someone's life.

REYNA: I firmly believe fire-based EMS develops a better relationship within fire and EMS professionals/crews. Better relationships, combined training, and overall compassion for our community is the best

aspect of being a Firefighter Paramedic. The patient outcome is greater and that is the ultimate goal.

BARKHAM: The gratification of knowing that you made a difference in someone's life. Positively influence the new firefighters getting into the field.

BOWERS: Having the knowledge and training to mitigate any emergency that arises. I call it Problem Solving 101. Firefighters are trained to think outside the box for solutions to any problems. Accompany that with EMS knowledge and training, and you have valuable assets.

JOHNSTON: Being a firefighter and a prehospital clinician allows me to be utilized in more than just one role when helping the citizens I serve. Being able to make a difference when a person is having their worst day is the best aspect of both.

NASH: I value having two very specific sets of skills that we can utilize. It also helps with keeping yourself calm in stressful situations.

Q What is your greatest professional challenge?

PHILLIPS: It seems it is forever a balance between the recordkeeping – both at the chief level and certainly at the patient care record for firefighters – and patient management. It seems every year that goes by we ponder new and inventive protocols, but we almost always wind up bogged down in the record keeping.

DUNAFAN: Finding and training the next generation of firefighters is a great challenge.



RODGERS: My greatest professional challenge is being able to provide exceptional care to the citizens of our community while under extreme mental, physical and emotional exhaustion.

REYNA: For us recently, the greatest challenge is transitioning from purely fire-based service to being a fire/EMS department. People often do not embrace change. Although the challenge was difficult during our merger in Mission, I believe our department recognized the need and used it as a strong point to become successful. The teamwork and comradery built is something I appreciate and value beyond words.

BARKHAM: Getting upper management to understand the importance of mental health and acting upon it.

BOWERS: Keeping up with the technology, new techniques, and knowledge of higher-level skills that change frequently.

JOHNSTON: I think that the greatest professional challenge is the mental health epidemic that is facing every one of us daily. The traumatic events we see daily – and the compounding effect that this has on our mental health – is crippling the profession on a level I don't think we fully realize.

NASH: Staying current with an ever-changing landscape.



What do you like about your profession?

PHILLIPS: I enjoy helping people. I used to have much more patient interaction and sometimes I miss that. Now, I try and do what I can to minimize obstacles for firefighters and in HFD – that is a particular challenge right now. But I am glad I am in a position to listen and help as I can and keep our excellent prehospital care something to be proud of.

DUNAFAN: I like the daily challenge of serving the community, the structure the fire service provides and the professionalism.

RODGERS: My profession gives me the opportunity to possibly make a difference in someone's life every shift. Creating a camaraderie with my coworkers who share the same experiences and to form friendships that can last for years.

REYNA: Regardless of any situation, I truly love my job and take great pride in being a public servant to my community. My dream became reality when I was hired as a firefighter for the City of Mission Fire Department. Nothing is more rewarding than the ability to serve the community I hold so near and dear to my heart. When difficult times arise, I remind myself it is my fate to care for people and provide the best service to a deserving community.

BARKHAM: I like my crew, I like my shift – it's a second family that I know has my back.

BOWERS: The comradery of working with other professionals in a highly charged and demanding occupation for the sole purpose of protecting lives and property in my community. I also feel that this occupation is highly respected and sought after.

JOHNSTON: The aspect of this profession that I love the absolute most is helping people on their worst days, plus it is pretty cool being a firefighter. I still feel like a little kid every time I get on the truck and hear the sirens.



What frustrates you about your profession?

PHILLIPS: Right now there is a significant shortage of both firefighters and medics in my department and it is not improving in any real way. The immediate effect is that we are stretching too thin the people counted on to save lives in crises around the city. It is just a matter of time before something catastrophic happens and we will have only ourselves to blame.

DUNAFAN: The politics and bureaucracy are frustrating. The ability to recruit and retain the next generation is becoming increasingly difficult.

RODGERS: EMS nationwide trails many other countries in the medical treatments and procedures they perform in the field. Unlike fire and police, EMS does not have national standards that all services follow. Each EMS service follows individual protocols approved by the service's medical director. Administrators should provide better working environments or actively take care of the mental and physical health issues plaguing our profession. The burnout rate continues to increase as call volumes climb every year. Too many services continue to operate the same number of ambulances, expecting the medics to compensate for being overworked and still show up for their scheduled shifts.

REYNA: Frustration came when some of our elected officials were not supportive of our need to provide a fire-based EMS service. It was already difficult to convince some of our personnel of the need to become a fire-based EMS service. The lack of support from some political leaders only worsened the issue.

BARKHAM: Sometimes frustrating is the feeling of being handcuffed to protocols instead of acting in the best interest of the patient. That inconsistency is difficult.

BOWERS: Of course, the physical and mental demands on each of us are frustrating. I'm concerned about the increasing PTSD cases due to the high physical and mental demands of the profession.

JOHNSTON: The most frustrating part of this profession, in my opinion, is the bureaucracy that surrounds it. I think the illusion some city officials have of the fire department is misplaced. A core service of the city, departments are too often put on the back burner when it comes to funding, which has a negative impact on public safety.

NASH: Pay and over-worked positions are frustrations for many Texas EMS professionals.



What could the Texas legislature change in the laws to make it easier for you to provide highest-possible quality care to your patients?

PHILLIPS: Some gun control legislation would help more citizens stay alive. In 2021, guns killed more children and teens than cancer, pneumonia, influenza, asthma, HIV/AIDS, and opioids combined, according to the nonprofit Children's Defense Fund. We see far too many gun injuries and worse.

DUNAFAN: Help with medication shortages should be considered. We also must improve high school education as a whole. The new generations are struggling with fire and paramedic school because of lack of

reading and math education. It's a constant battle to get new recruits through paramedic school because of the poor foundation laid by our secondary school systems.

RODGERS: The Texas legislature needs to realize that EMS is as important to have available in every community as is fire and police. EMS is all too often the forgotten branch of first responders and, as such, we do not have all of the necessary protections or regulations to guide our working conditions, treatment and job functions.

REYNA: The legislature could help by assisting in making more efficient the long legal process for departments that are willing to become fire-based EMS. Applications are long and tedious, purchases of equipment and training of personnel is time consuming and expensive, which can also be a contributing factor for departments not wanting to grow into a bigger fire-based EMS services.

BARKHAM: I urge the legislature to find ways to make state of the art equipment available to all communities at reasonable prices. It seems to be an advanced department with top-of-the-line equipment you have to have a large budget.

BOWERS: Earlier eligibility for Medicare for first responders would be helpful. Too many responders stay too long on active duty due to health coverage costs. I would like to see more acknowledgment and funding for mental health/PTSD-related injuries associated with first responders. Workers comp carriers also need to better acknowledge and accept PTSD claims and provide treatment earlier.

JOHNSTON: I think stories like the one coming out of Colorado with the paramedics' use of ketamine in the recent death case need to be reviewed. Maybe at the state level, legislation can prevent a non-medical, non-informed bureaucracy from dictating patient care protocols as a response to fear of litigation.

Skill dilution is a concern in EMS. How does your department ensure that you're well trained and prepared for medical emergencies?

PHILLIPS: We have a couple of people that keep detailed statistics, and we used their information to do evidence-based training in areas like advanced airway management and drug administration. We used to do quarterly medical management – training, updates on protocol changes, the usual exhortations to do your records, etc. We just finished training all the medics in the city on airway management as we came out of the last pandemic surge and can now be more aggressive with respiratory interventions.

DUNAFAN: We have a full-time continuing education coordinator and have required monthly CE. We also have two EMS shift supervisors who provide QA/QI feedback.

RODGERS: Currently, online CEs are being offered since EMS has been merged with the fire department. The standard card certifications that most all EMS services require are not yet offered here. Divisional medical, field and skills training is minimal to nonexistent. The merged employees need more training for medical emergencies, IC incidents or triage.

REYNA: Our administration, along with our training division, has spearheaded a strong development for continued training to counter skill dilution. We are current with national standards and practice continued education to provide the best care in regards to medical emergencies.

BARKHAM: We have thorough CE with the medical director present, along with a strong FTO program, and QC/QI by field paramedics.

BOWERS: Aside from the usual continuing education hours, we do promote higher level of training, such as ACLS, PALS, AMLS, etc.

JOHNSTON: Our training department does an exemplary job on keeping our skills current, from yearly cadaver labs to 40 hours of in-person instruction with our department FTO's training new paramedics.

NASH: We have monthly EMS department training as well as individual crew EMS training.

What does it mean to you to be a union firefighter/EMT, AEMT, or Paramedic?

PHILLIPS: I look at places that do not have a union or any real representation, and then I take a look at our local government. From that, I know for a fact we would be the lowest paid, most maligned group in the city if L-341 wasn't in there fighting for every penny for us. I still find it appalling we have to have "bake sales" for basic lifesaving equipment – such as heavy rescue tools, TICs, and training – but that is what funding we are looking at.

DUNAFAN: Knowing that we have a local and state association fighting to protect our employment rights and assuring we get the right tools to provide the best patient care is comforting.

RODGERS: Becoming a member of the union and elected as the EMS steward has been both rewarding and challenging. I have been afforded the opportunity to learn what the union stands for and the governing laws and regulations. I use my position to affect positive changes within the department, to work for and to represent my coworkers, and will continue to advocate for better working conditions and benefits for those of us performing the job on the ground daily despite the roadblocks and challenges.

REYNA: Fortunately, our union is strong and active in all aspects and has worked towards the need for becoming a fire-based EMS department. Without our union's support, we may not have been as successful in establishing our EMS integration.

BARKHAM: We have people that will be in our corner in times of need. We have people that will stand for us that allows us to do our job with comfort.

BOWERS: As a 34-year union member and an officer in my association, it means everything. It is our duty to promote and try to better the working conditions, benefits, and overall atmosphere for our current and future firefighters. I have better pay, benefits, and working conditions from when I started in 1988, thanks to the union leaders at that time. We should always strive to better our profession both for the public and first responders.

JOHNSTON: For me, being a union firefighter/paramedic is a blessing. Until three years ago, when I became involved in L-542, I really did not understand what it meant to be a union guy. For far too long, we were told that the union was present for in case you got in trouble. I did not realize how different that was from the truth, from community support to fighting for support for the department, it is more of a way to help the community.

NASH: I feel the union is very important with the contacts you can make



How do hospital interactions and partnerships affect your EMS capabilities and responses?

PHILLIPS: We need to partner even closer with our hospitals to more seamlessly deliver service. There are some programs out there that base their responses on community medicine, and I think that would serve many people that utilize the ED and EMS as frontline care much better than what we are currently doing. However, without significant buy-in from both agencies and adoption of policies that work for both parties, we are still a way off from that relationship.

DUNAFAN: They enhance our ability to provide patient care. The majority of facilities we transport to give us feedback and updates on the patients we transport to them. They also provide us with additional educational opportunities.

RODGERS: I have a very good reputation with the hospital nursing staff and physicians. They have trust in my medical knowledge, experience and capabilities so that when I bring in patients that are critical, they know that have not only treated the patient above and beyond, but they listen to everything I have to say about the patient. Having that trust with hospital staff, helps with patient care turnover and better hospital times.

REYNA: In our region, we have strong relationships with our hospitals and they have embraced our continuing goal to provide this service to our community.

BARKHAM: It benefits all of us. Ultimately a strong partnership between the EMS and hospital positively affects the care for the patient and their families.

BOWERS: Most of our hospital interactions and partnerships involve learning how each side can assist the other with proficient and timely care of the public from onset of emergency through hospital treatment and recovery.

JOHNSTON: Local hospitals have developed a trust with fire-based EMS. The continuity of care flows without interruption and there is an understanding from our RN staff at the hospitals that patients are provided with ALS on scene prior to out transport agencies arrival.

NASH: In our area this cooperation is really an issue.



Anything else you would like to add?

PHILLIPS: Texas is unique in the provision of EMS care. Our standards of care and protocols are delegated by each local medical director

physician. With that, I appreciate the enormous responsibility and privilege of the entire concept of "offline medical care." Intubations, electro cardioversion, trauma management are skills that can be taught and refreshed. What makes the most difference in patient outcomes is the ability of a medic to make excellent decisions, within the protocols, and make those decisions in difficult conditions. Many times, the treatment and transport decisions are even more consequential than the ones made in the hospitals. This in-the-field care is a huge benefit to a citizen in crisis.

DUNAFAN: The fire service will be challenged the next 10 years as we struggle to recruit quality individuals. We must find a way to recruit and retain highly motivated individuals.

RODGERS: In December 2020, the city merged EMS into Beaumont Fire / Rescue, creating one department. Since that time, we have worked under one license and the same set of BFR protocols. There has been extensive training by the training office for the firefighters who are now operating on the med units daily. This development has forged a stronger more supportive relationship between the field medics and firefighters. With that training, we now work as one cohesive unit when treating patients which has only benefited the citizens we serve. I hope our department management, which has little or no experience working EMS, will fully listen to those who actually perform field duties daily and fully commit to positive growth and development within the department. EMS for too many of us means long hours, mandatory overtime, dealing with the stressful calls, the ever-increasing BLS calls, and a lack of downtime to eat, rest or sleep. Until we come together to stand united with a purpose of improvement and desire to succeed, failure and disappointment are looming threats.

REYNA: I am proud to be a member of L-3609. I am passionate towards being a fire-based EMS department. The pandemic opened our eyes to our community's needs. We must be prepared to provide the best to our community because they deserve it. They entrust us with protecting their lives, property, and environment and EMS needs to be part of that. We always need to care. We need keep intense compassion for the people we serve. We need to fall in love with our job daily. It is our duty as public servants to fight for them. If not us, then who, as the saying goes. With fire-based EMS, the Mission Fire Department is making new history and I am ineffably grateful to be part of it.

BOWERS: I will add that I find it extremely important that along with highly educated and trained EMS personnel, there should be highly trained and motivated EMS supervision positions within the organization. The EMS personnel must have leadership to look to for information, knowledge, guidance, support, etc.

JOHNSTON: I think that fire-based EMS is where departments need to focus moving forward in the future. I don't think that private EMS is going very good within the state. In my opinion when a "public service agency" is for profit, the mission of that agency is compromised. I am blessed every day that I get to serve the citizens of my community and am proud to be a member of the L-542 in Amarillo. The citizens of this community are what matter most at the end of the day, and we as firefighters will always be here to answer their call regardless of the bureaucracy in the city and the department's administration.

District 1 Focus on Building Political Relationships

*Vice President
Bobby Whiteley*

Brothers and sisters, I hope you are all doing well and enjoying summer activities. Of course, there will so much do, you will have to pick and choose what activities you want to do. It seems we are headed in the right direction to get back on track of what we do. I have already been visiting some locals and many more of you are on my schedule.

In late-May and early-June, we held the Louis E. Hebert leadership conference. It was somewhat of a grand re-opening so to speak of getting back to business.

In the third week of May, I appreciated the opportunity to hear from local presidents in meetings with IAFF 11th District Vice President Sandy McGhee as we launched another west Texas "Every Local Matters." We enjoyed visiting as many locals as possible in that one-week trip.

As things seem to be getting back to normal, we still have the same issues as always and they need attention as always. Health, safety, benefits, working conditions are still what our members have as priorities. Of course, salary

is always priority. As we often say, the way to improve these priorities is through your local relationships with administration and elected officials. TSAFF board and staff can't cultivate these relationships with your local officials for you, but we can educate and direct your executive boards on how to build these relationships. Each time you and your members participate in TSAFF educational activities, you gain experience and confidence in your skills to represent your members.

It seems that recently I have had to remind some locals that you are held in high regard in your communities. Please remember:

- Our members throughout the state continually serve their communities in ways that are vital to the citizens they serve.
- Never underestimate your worth in your community. In doing the good work for your local and your community, you have a seat at the table.
- Your opinions and actions deserve to be heard. Of course there are administrative employees who disagree, but we will not be




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going away, and they will eventually.

- We essentially carry a bat in our work for our locals, and we need to swing it. In other words, do not step in the batter's box and watch pitches go by, swing and just see what happens.
- We certainly don't win them all, but we have to try – and we have to plan.
- Please have confidence in your abilities and your elected board members.

And, as always, we are here to help, and remember: There's strength in brotherhood.



Abilene L-1044 recently hosted Texas firefighter leaders at the latest two-day TSAFF Secretary-Treasurer workshop. 

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Rick Mumey

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PRINCIPAL OFFICE: HOUSTON

District 2

Work on Workers Comp Issues Continues

Vice President
Beau Simpson

As we wrap up the first phase of this year's election season, I can't help but feel extremely proud of the efforts of our TSAFF and locals across the state. An overwhelming majority of our endorsed candidates have been successful to this point.

I am confident in saying that without the endorsements and campaign contributions of firefighters, some of these candidates would not be in the position they are. This reiterates the importance of our political involvement. While most of our locals have members that think we should not be involved in politics or discuss getting out of the local because of our "wrong" party affiliate endorsement, we must understand the importance of consistently being involved in the political arena. While some would say our involvement in Austin is the most important, I will argue that being involved politically at the local government level is equally as important if not more so. The time to meet our governing officials is not when we need them to do something for us or support a bill we are trying to pass. If your local is not politically involved, I would suggest beginning at

the local level and building relationships with those individuals.

The work comp system continues to be at the forefront of our issues. While we have passed bills that have helped improve the system for first responders, we still have multiple members having issues with the system. Recently, we have had a firefighter suffer a heart attack inside a working fire that received a denial because TML decided the firefighter was not in an unusually stressful event. Lubbock L-972 is assisting the widow of past president Jay Watson as she is being sued by the insurance provider to stop benefit payments despite the case being awarded in our favor at multiple levels. The unfortunate death of Carrollton L-2182 member Lee Holbert, due to a stroke at the station, was denied using the "non-stressful event" terminology. While TML denied the claim, the City of Carrollton treated it as a LODD as did the IAFF. Lee's spouse received the POSB federal benefits due to their agreement of the stroke being a compensable illness, however the state 615 benefit was denied because TML denied the claim. We are



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working to have this denial reversed without the assistance of the City of Carrollton and are doing the same for multiple cases across the state.

We have recently hosted work comp classes in McAllen L-2602, Tyler L-883, and Beaumont L-399 to help educate our members on the processes and terminology of the system. Shortly after the McAllen class, the Brownsville L-970 president sent the following message:

"My crew and I were roped into a meeting with our medical director by pure coincidence and it turns out that the topic of that discussion was workman's comp. Our department is looking into contracting an advocacy group to help expedite our member's return from injury. I was able to speak intelligently enough that our medical director, who really doesn't care for me much, was impressed and wants us to formally educate the department members on their rights under workman's comp."

If your local is interested in hosting a class, please let your DVP know, and we will work on getting one scheduled.

↓ Denton L-1291 co-hosted fire department rookies for a discussion of mental health and resiliency in the fire service.



District 4 Resources Available for Contract Negotiations, Political Action

Vice President
Mark Medrano

As we continue with a strong 2022 for the TSAFF, a new season for bargaining is underway around the state for those who have collective bargaining or meet and confer rights.

La Marque L-3282 will be negotiating a new contract with assistance from Rafael Torres along with Texas City L-1259.

Baytown L-1173 will begin negotiations soon and handles their own negotiations as well as Beaumont L-399.

If anyone needs assistance with negotiating a contract, please reach out for assistance. This is a resource provided by your dues payments.

I welcome our newest local, Cy-Fair L-5248. With more than 300 members in the fire department, they have 80 local members so far with the potential of becoming the largest local in our district.

Beaumont L-399 has written a letter to IAFF General President Ed Kelly concerning his decision to terminate without executive board

approval the services of the law firm that represented the IAFF and members nationally for five-plus decades. That dispute was resolved early in June at the IAFF board meeting.

There is a severe shortage of paramedics around the entire State and Locals are understaffed everywhere, not because fire departments will not necessarily hire more personnel, but simply because applicants are not showing up to take the test!

We are getting ready for the next Texas legislative session and the statewide general election on Nov. 8, 2022.

If you are not sure who is running for office in your district, the 4th District legislative agent is Lloyd Sandefer of Conroe L-2731. Your TSAFF legislative director is Glenn Deshields and the deputy legislative director is Chase Fruge. Please contact me if you have any questions.

I have held Zoom meetings with good turnout in recent months. I intend to hold a Zoom meeting every month to stay in touch with the



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district. These are informational meetings to touch base with everyone and make sure that we are addressing your needs.

Baytown held a Fire-Ops in April with participation from local elected officials. The event went very well.

Lufkin L-3281 President Mack Grace requested that IAFF District 11 Vice President Sandy McGhee and I for a visit with their membership about the importance of becoming politically involved to improve relationships with elected officials and their appointees. I have created a PowerPoint presentation for this situation and presented it to the local and had a good turnout at their union meeting. It seems to have been pretty effective to let the members know how important it is to be politically active.

If you would like me to come to put the presentation on for your members, please feel free to contact me to set up a meeting and I am quite sure that I can arrange for DVP McGhee to join me.

Please remember to send updated local officer information when there are changes in your principal officers to cindy@tsaff.org.

Please watch for upcoming district Zoom meetings. Be safe!

↓ *Beaumont L-399 hosted a workers' comp class taught by TSAFF District VP Beau Simpson. Other district locals participating in the class included Baytown L-1173, Cy-Fair L-5248, Groves L-1905, Conroe L-2731, Lake Travis L-4117, Port Arthur L-397, and Port Neches L-3713.*



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The IAFF Fallen Fire Fighter Memorial in Colorado Springs.

TSAFF Honors COVID-19 LODDs



Leroy Lucio
Houston L-341



Erik Segura
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Gerardo Pacheco
Houston L-341



Jesse Turribiate
La Marque L-3282



**Jesus "Jesse"
De La Rosa**
Weslaco L-3207



Tanner Reed
Houston L-341



Tommy Searcy
Houston L-341



Robert V. Liguez
Alice L-4102



Randy Robinson
Fort Worth L-440



**Richard "Brad"
Hargrave**
Garland L-1293

District 5 Unlocking Our Full Potential as a Union

Vice President
Pedro “Pete” Martinez

Hello, brothers and sisters of the TSAFF 5th District and fellow members across the state. I hope everyone’s summer is going well and you’re able to spend some time with family and friends. In this edition of the TSAFF newsletter, I’m going to touch on a topic that has been a concern of mine throughout my union career: What are we doing to unlock the full potential of our union/association members?

Let’s start off with what we know. Each local that belongs to the state and international are periodically provided or notified of training and development opportunities within each organization. This training can be information from how to run a meeting all the way to how to negotiate contracts with city management or elected officials. For all of us that have been

in the game a long time, we know how valuable this training can be, especially to our newly elected leaders. Yet the question remains: Are we doing enough for our members and those who wish to one day take over our roles? It is my opinion that these training courses not only improve our skills as labor leaders but can also enhance our work performance. Membership trainings are essential to the success of each firefighter. We owe it to our members to provide continuing education to keep our members motivated and engaged. Whether it’s through a hands-on training where real-life activities can be applied to one’s daily responsibility, an on-line training which can be done remotely and save on training costs or mentorship programs where we pair the newest members with more senior members, all provide a

↓ Irving L-2073 President Daniel Rozier was recognized by MDAs Gina Lansing for excellent Fill the Boot work.



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variety of benefits, which include skill development, team building, development of leadership skills, and overall, enables our members to simply do better at their jobs.

Knowing how important training is to the longevity of our locals, what do we do next? In the 5th District, we have had extensive conversations about training, the availability of such and the common denominator that holds us back is money. A lot of locals fail to properly identify what training is needed and they fail on properly budgeting for their leaders and future leaders to attend. Many local budgets are about to be reviewed in the upcoming months and we should all take a look at where our training budgets stand. The departments we work for, whether it’s in hard or easy financial times, still prepare and plan for training. We must make the same effort as your department does to ensure that our leaders, whether it be local or state or international, are trained to the highest standard to advocate for their members.

As always if anyone needs help putting a plan together or having a review of their budget, please don’t hesitate to reach out to me or one of our DFRSs who will be happy to help.

District 6 Strength Through Action

Houston L-341 firefighters head to the state's highest court

Vice President
Patrick M. "Marty" Lancton

NEVER FORGET. We say those words to describe the life and legacy of our fallen brothers and sisters, but words without action have no meaning. Whether big or small, our locals need to act to achieve change.

Too often, city and county leadership take advantage of our firefighters and paramedics because they know our hearts are committed to serving the citizens we swore an oath to protect. Regardless of how much is asked or how little is done to protect us, we are always there for what is often the worst day of someone's life. As your leaders, we must fight just as hard for our members, their families and the next generation of firefighters as we fight for the lives and property of the citizens calling 911 every day.

With the next legislative session fast

approaching, we are preparing the actions necessary to pass bills that will help our members and kill the bills that seek to do harm. We know there are bad actors who hope that if they delay long enough, the truth will never come to light. We must remain steadfast in our actions and commitment to continue fighting by any means possible.

On the legal front the Texas Supreme Court took action before adjourning for the summer to set November 29, 2022, as the day it will hear oral arguments in the city lawsuit challenging the voter-approved Texas constitutional amendment guaranteeing Houston firefighters and all other first responders in Texas under the TLGC Chapter 174 "Fire and Police Employment Relations Act" (also known as Collective Bargaining), the right to fair pay, benefits and working conditions, by state statute.

↓ Houston L-341 firefighters, family and friends recently gathered for the memorial service for Firefighter Malcolm Willis. Photo credit: Austin Miller



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We know that Mayor Sylvester Turner has been using the courts to delay doing the right thing for Houston firefighters and their families for too long. Now he and his army of attorneys, who are wasting millions of taxpayer dollars to attack us, are out of time and options. We are prepared to expose the hypocrisy of their arguments and are confident the state supreme court will come down on the side of justice.

The Texas Supreme Court is also considering whether to hear oral arguments about the Proposition B pay parity referendum Houston voters approved for Houston firefighters in 2018. Briefs are due in July, with a decision expected sometime after the court reconvenes from the summer break.

HPFFA heads to the state's highest court with wins for collective bargaining and Prop B at both the district and appellate levels.

In closing, whether ensuring the fallen are remembered for their sacrifice and their families are taken care of or fighting for members while they are living, action is what changes the lives and livelihoods of those we represent. God bless you, sisters and brothers.

Legislative Report Extraordinary Election Cycle Is Underway

Legislative Director
Glenn Deshields

We are in one of the biggest election cycles we have been in in a decade. In the primary election, we endorsed 78 candidates and only lost 2, but had 11 go to runoffs. We are currently hard at work for the May 24 runoff election. Once again, if you have any questions about these elections and who we are endorsing, please contact us immediately. We will be releasing lots of information over the next few weeks and are currently on the ground in many of these elections already. This will be the most important thing for our State Association over the next 2-month period.

We held our biennial Legislative Convention in Fort Worth in January. For the 2023 Legislative Session, we are once again focusing on our ability to contract with our employers in a fair manner, protect our firefighters when it comes to workplace injuries and illnesses, and get state money to help our fire

departments. We still have major issues when it comes to getting treated properly at the negotiating table and after injuries. We have made great strides over the last few sessions to change this, but problems still exist. We also need the ability to be able to decide contractual differences without having to go to court. We are working on ways to rectify this.

Budgets are always lean and the State needs to step up for fire departments like they do for law enforcement. We are planning on seeking large sums of money to be distributed to our departments this coming Session. The State gave \$800 million to DPS only a few years ago for border issues. They only came forward with a million for us. This has to change. Wildfire in our suburban areas is going to be a growing concern. The State needs to provide real monies to help local governments tackle this. Putting the Forestry Service in charge is not cutting it. We need real equipment and



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fast access to personnel. We believe the State budget is the way to provide this support. The Forestry Service has never done a good job of supporting professional departments and it might be best to short circuit them altogether.

Once again, please contact me, night or day at gdeshield@tsaff.org or call or text at (512) 947-1349.



ADVERTISE WITH US TEXAS FIRE FIGHTER

Advertising in the Texas Fire Fighter newsletter is a great way to reach more than 18,000 professional Texas fire fighters in 190 communities.

For more information, please contact Cindy Gonzales at the TSAFF office at (512) 326-5050 or cindy@tsaff.org.

Political Report

Reminders about PAC Basics

Political Director
Chase Fruge

What is a political action committee or PAC? What does it do? And how can it help my local's political program?

We often get questions about political action committees or PACs from locals across the state on how they are created, operated, used and can be beneficial. These are some commonly asked questions and answers about PACs:

What is a PAC?

A PAC is an organization created to raise and distribute money to support favored candidates and committees and/or to oppose adversarial candidates and committees. PACs may also be established to pass or defeat a ballot measure (i.e.: TABOR, right-to-work). PACs may also conduct independent expenditures supporting or opposing a candidate.

Why do we need a PAC?

To have influence in the local government, legislative, and political arena, you must put your money where your mouth is. Organization is only half of the equation of successful political action.

If you want to elect fire fighter-friendly

government representatives, you must have the resources to execute your campaign plan.

How do you establish a PAC?

In a few simple steps you can establish the basic framework for a PAC:

1. Pick a name, treasurer and decide on the rules and guidelines you want your PAC to operate under.
2. File with the IRS and the Texas Ethics Commission.
3. With the Ethics Commission and IRS documentation, open a separate bank account from your associations.

Do PACs have contribution limits?

- No limit on contributions to candidates for state office.
- The limit on contributions to local and municipal candidates is based on local laws.
- No limit on contributions for political party committees.
- No limit to contribute to ballot measure committees.

I have heard that reporting can be cumbersome, is that true?



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No. The Texas Ethics Commission simply ask that you report electronically:

- Semi-Annual reports are due January 15 and July 15 and
- Pre-election reports 30 days and eight days prior to primary and general elections
- Runoff reports eight days prior to runoff elections

What's the difference between "hard" and "soft" money?

Simply put, hard money is individual voluntary contributions and soft money is treasury funds or association dues. Texas unions cannot transfer money from their general treasury accounts to their PAC.

What is a Super PAC?

A generic term for a PAC that can accept soft money but cannot contribute to candidates. This kind of PAC still has reporting requirements and cannot coordinate with a candidate for office.

I hope this answers some questions or generates more regarding these valuable tools available to us. Please remember: Glenn Deshields and I are ready to assist in any and all ways regarding PACs.

As always, the TSAFF staff is a great resource for any questions related to political action. But if you like to take a deeper dive into how the State of Texas regulates PACs, please see the following resources by the Texas Ethics Commission:

Find TEC form:

<https://www.ethics.state.tx.us/forms/QuickFindAForm.php>

Contact the TEC:

<https://www.ethics.state.tx.us/resources/laws-regulations/CallLegal.php>

Starting a PAC by the TEC:

<https://www.ethics.state.tx.us/resources/cf/StartEndPAC.php>

TEC FAQ's:

<https://www.ethics.state.tx.us/resources/FAQs/>

Service Report

Your Workers' Comp Resources

Service Director
Rafael Torres

Over the past several months, there have been many calls for help with workers compensation claims at the local level causing a great deal of uncertainty to the persons involved. This usually starts when the firefighter receives a letter from the Texas Municipal League (TML) or some other third-party administrator stating their workers' compensation claim is "denied."

It is important for the local union leadership to prepare for the inevitable, to preplan the basics of what to do when that call comes in for help and know how to deal with it.

This usually arises for any number of disputes but can usually be taken care of

with a good line of communication to the proper party. The entity who manages

the denial letter, this is almost always your city's third-party administrator whose information is usually at the bottom of the denial with a name and number to contact that person.

It is important for the denied firefighter to

make contact with that person or insurance adjuster, please make sure someone in your local can be called to help the denied firefighter. There is nothing more frustrating than to have a local call 30 to 90 days after needing assistance with processing the denial appeal, there are timelines that should be adhered to.

Workers' compensation is a state-regulated insurance program for your municipality that pays the employees medical bills and replaces a portion of your lost wages if you have a work-related injury or illness and your employer has workers' Compensation insurance under the Texas Workers' Compensation Act. All municipalities and other political subdivisions in Texas must have such coverage.

If a dispute arises about your injury, the first thing you should do is call the insurance carrier and discuss your problem(s) with your adjuster. If you cannot resolve the dispute or if you are unable to talk with your adjuster, you may contact the Texas Department of Insurance, Department of Workers' Compensation



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for help at (800) 578-4677.

Workers' Compensation service employees can:

- explain your rights and responsibilities;
- help you complete required forms;
- explain the dispute resolution process,
- explain how to gather facts and evidence to support your side of the dispute;
- explain the deadlines for requesting the next level of dispute
- resolution or for responding to requests for documents; and
- help you attempt to resolve disputes informally.

If you are unable to receive the coverage under the workers' compensation through the city's adjuster, you may need to file an appeal of the denial of benefits through a Benefit Review Conference (BRC) to get relief. Once a BRC is scheduled, an ombudsman under the Texas Department of Insurance (TDI) will help you if you do not have another representative to present your side of the dispute.

The big takeaway is to call your local union when you are injured, and your claim is denied so that you have every opportunity to have the chance to heal and return to work.

Welcome to New TSAFF Affiliates



Aubrey L-5027

Cy-Fair L-5248

Keene L-4367

Williamson County ESD 7 L-5296

Health & Safety Committee NFPA 1582 Compliance Campaign to Begin

James A. Younger

Your TSAFF Health and safety committee has been hard at work in their respective areas of expertise. In the coming months, be on the lookout for a questionnaire that is going to poll the locals and their leadership on each departments use and compliance with NFPA 1582. We are looking to build a spreadsheet that will identify areas of compliance statewide and areas that need attention here in the state of Texas.

What is NFPA 1582, you may ask? Well, it is a specific list of medical exams and physical testing a department should use when a firefighter joins a department and every year after while said firefighter is employed.

NFPA 1582 Requirements – Physical Exam

The following physical testing is required by NFPA 1582:

- Aerobic capacity
- Body composition
- Grip strength
- Leg strength
- Arm strength
- Muscular endurance
- Flexibility

The following medical testing is required by NFPA 1582:

- Blood analysis
- Urinalysis
- Pulmonary function test
- Chest X-ray (every five years)
- EKG
- Infectious disease screening
- Cancer screening
- Audiometric exam

While NFPA cannot enforce the standard, it is strongly recommended that departments

and states adopt the standard and enforce it either at the local or state level. While every firefighter is different, our end goal is and will always be the same: Everyone goes home!

The physical exam includes items such as aerobic capacity or the ability of a firefighter to recover after exercise. This exam is a great reflection of a firefighter's endurance. Some other exams include body composition, grip strength, leg and arm strength, muscular endurance and flexibility. We all know that firefighter with low back problems. This is most likely linked to poor flexibility in the hamstrings and glutes. Physical readiness for the job of a firefighter is a complete package a too many of us are guilty of concentrating on only part of the package.

The next component of 1582 is the medical examination, and it is very detailed. Many of you already visit your primary physician once a year for that generic run down physical. It's well and good for an ordinary citizen, but as first responders we are expected to stress our bodies and minds to the limit on a regular basis without over taxing or overexerting ourselves in order to accomplish tasks. The medical examination is a great way to start the medical surveillance of all firefighters to catch life threatening trends early and correct issue so that all firefighters can spend those retirement dollars we work so hard for.

The medical exam is made up of several checks and balances starting with blood analysis, urinalysis, pulmonary function test, EKG, infectious disease screening, cancer screening, audiometric exam (hearing test), vision testing and every five years a chest x-ray.

Finally, we move to the department's written document for the use of respiratory protection. FIT testing should be done annually



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for each employee required to use respiratory protection during the course of their job performance. The FIT testing component should include all respiratory protection available to all employees to include tightly sealing SCBA face pieces as well as N-95 medical respiratory protection. For reference on the respiratory standards, please refer to OSHA Standard 1910.134 (c)(1).

Our cities, towns and municipalities invest a great deal of time, enormous amounts of money and man-hours to produce the best firefighters for their citizens. We, as firefighters, have been towing a heavy line to put into place these protections for our own. If you are looking at this all and thinking the task is daunting and the uphill challenge in today's financial climate is going to hinder you, we are here for you. The spreadsheet we are going to build will be available for all to view, allowing departments to seek assistance on how to take the first steps towards making 1582 a reality for all our departments across the great state of Texas. As always stay safe, stay alert, and everyone goes home.

IAFF District 11 Report

Gratitude for Support of District's Benevolent Fund

IAFF 11th District Vice President
R.L. "Sandy" McGhee, III

In June firefighters from across District 11 gathered at the Tanglewood Resort on Lake Texoma to attend the first joint Texas State Association of Fire Fighters and Professional Fire Fighters of Oklahoma Leadership Conference.

The conference was inspired by and named after Louis Hebert and Tom Riddle. Louis, retired from Beaumont and a longtime IAFF labor leader, and Tom, the late Oklahoma City labor leader, worked together over many years organizing new IAFF local unions in District 11.

↓ *TSAFF and PFFO members, along with sponsors, raised \$30,915 for the IAFF District 11 Benevolent Fund with the golf tournament and recent Leadership Conference.*



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They were instrumental in educating our district leaders on the processes contained in the state-wide collective bargaining law in Oklahoma and in Texas cities that won referendum elections for bargaining. They formed an indelible bond that has served as the foundation for the fellowship District 11 firefighters enjoy across the Mighty 11th.

As part of the leadership conference program, a charitable golf tournament was held with money raised benefitting the District 11 Benevolent Fund. The fund was established in 2017/2018 as a Public Charity under IRS 501 3 (c) rules. The fund's sole purpose is to assist District 11 Firefighters with out-of-pocket expenses who are experiencing behavioral health issues and who attend treatment at the IAFF Center of Excellence, the first recovery center designed specifically for IAFF members.

Created through an innovative partnership with Advanced Recovery Systems, a nationwide leader in rehabilitation and behavioral health, the IAFF Center of Excellence is a flagship recovery center exclusively for IAFF members. Fire fighters and paramedics who struggle with substance use disorders and co-occurring behavioral health issues, such as

IAFF District 11 Report

(continued)

PTSD, depression or anxiety, can heal in a safe space among their brothers and sisters.

Union dues at \$.05 per member per month serve as the base funding mechanism for our benevolent fund. We are thankful for the revenue. Unfortunately, it simply is not enough. Because there is an ever-present need for assistance, the fund maintains a minimum balance. I am pleased to report the golf tournament raised \$30,915 for the fund. This is a huge financial shot in the arm for the fund. The revenue from the golf tournament has provided

welcome relief from the pressure of less than adequate funding to assist our members.

I want to thank the tournament organizers, everyone that played, and those that donated to our cause, especially our presenting sponsor, the Houston Professional Firefighters Association, L-341 Charitable Foundation whose members and donors generously provided \$10,000 to the fund.

Thank you for all the work and support. Stay safe.

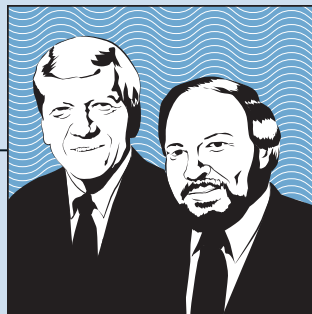
TSAFF Members



Please help us help you by staying in contact.

1. Please log in to TSAFF.org to update or activate your account for upcoming text and email alerts, and other information.
2. Please like the TSAFF Facebook page and the TSAFF Twitter feed— @TSAFFNews — and encourage your family and friends to do so as well.

Thank you.



LOUIS E. HEBERT & TOM RIDDLE LEADERSHIP SEMINAR

Presented by TSAFF and PFFO

The Texas State Association of Fire Fighters and the Professional Fire Fighters of Oklahoma offer thanks to the sponsors of our inaugural seminar.

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NTA Life
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Xcel Office Solutions

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MDA Report

MDA's Team, Support Growing in Texas

Becky Prine

We are excited to share that our fire fighter partnerships team is growing and we now have two people dedicated to the 11th District! Gina Lansing is back on the team – she will be a familiar face to many of you in North Texas.

Looking back, 2021 was a much better year for MDA with over 600 Fill the Boot collections across the country! Many reported record-breaking totals and the response from the community was incredible! We are grateful for those who were able to collect for MDA last year, but also understand many of you were still facing challenges in your communities.

The Fill the Boot program is so critical to fund MDA's mission, to ensure that effective treatments and therapies are found for neuromuscular diseases. We need your help as we continue to rebuild our Fill the Boot program! We are beyond thrilled we already have many collection dates secured for 2022! If we have not already, we would absolutely love to add your local to the list!

Because of the support of fire fighters, MDA has been able to fund research directly linked to FDA-approved therapies across multiple neuromuscular diseases. These therapies are life-changing for MDA families, giving

them greater access to life's possibilities as they live longer and stronger. Funding has also helped MDA advance care through our National Care Center Network and provide much-needed community education, advocacy, recreation, support and connection. This would not have been possible without the support of the IAFF and fire fighters across the great state of Texas.

Research

Research is literally changing lives with the new drugs being approved to slow or stop disease progression. In the last seven years, 15 therapies for specific neuromuscular diseases have shown enough efficacy to win FDA approval, 4 new ones in 2021 alone.

Last fall, we were proud to announce the awarding of 18 new MDA grants totaling over \$1.6 million toward neuromuscular disease research. This round of grant funding reinforces our unwavering commitment to the progress of neuromuscular disease research. The newly funded projects will aim to advance discoveries and therapy development in multiple areas including amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), Duchenne muscular dystrophy (DMD), spinal muscular atrophy (SMA), Charcot Marie Tooth



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 Fire Fighter Partnerships**
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disease (CMT) and myotonic dystrophy.

Summer Camp

MDA is excited to announce that MDA Summer camp will be back in-person camp this year. This summer, MDA will offer two options for families. We are building back our in-person Summer Camp program while continuing to provide a virtual program as well. Our top priority is the health and safety of our campers, volunteers, and staff. Not every camp will be back in 2022, but kids from every part of the state will have the opportunity to attend one of our camps.

Fill the Boot 2022

We need your help to get Texas Fill the Boot going strong again! Please work with your local to get dates set for 2022! We look forward to working with you to #ReBoot your Fill the Boot collection. Please reach out to us – share your collection dates and let us help you plan for a successful Fill the Boot!

My contact information is listed above, and here's how to reach Gina:

Gina Lansing
 Account Manager, Fire Fighter Partnerships
 Cell: (262) 424.9964
 Email: glansing@mdausa.org

Texas was the No. 2 state in the nation in 2021 for Fill the Boot collection totals.

Top TSAFF Collecting Locals in 2021

1	Bryan L-1204	\$71,200
2	Irving L-2073	\$67,343
3	Wichita Falls L-432	\$54,709
4	El Paso L-51	\$45,322

TCFP Report

TSAFF Advocates for Fire Fighters at TCFP

Michael Glynn

The Texas Commission on Fire Protection (TCFP) meets quarterly in Austin. These meetings are open to the public, and I encourage our members to attend as often as possible. At our most recent meeting on April 21, the commissioners voted unanimously to decrease the renewal fees from \$75 down to \$60. This will result in a budget savings for each of your department's you need to be familiar with to share with your fire chiefs.

You can help your fire administration out by making sure they are aware of this development, so they work to protect these savings and them within your department's budgets. It is worth pointing out that there is a state law whereby we must increase revenues to offset the decrease the fees for IFSAC seals. Due to this, we also had to vote to increase these fees from \$15 to \$30 each.

This past legislative session, the TCFP was under sunset review. This led to the Sunset Advisory Commission providing their report to the commission prior to the last legislative session which included 11 recommendations we must respond to over the next two years.

At the most recent regional meetings held in West Texas in San Angelo, Amarillo, and Wichita Falls, Agency Chief Mike Wisko reported that TCFP staff have already completed seven of the 11 recommendations. They will continue to work through the remaining four, however it is important to note that one of these includes direction to consider us moving to a longer renewal period.

As you know, TDSHS has a four-year renewal period for our EMS certificates and licenses. It has already been pointed out that if we were to move to this kind of system then



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our fire departments would likely be having to fight for including these renewal fees in their budgets every four years since nothing would be spent from that line item during the years in between each renewal period.

Recently, there has been ad-hoc committee work to review and update the rules for Chapters 427 Training Facility Certification and 435 Fire Fighter Safety. Some of what you will see directly impacting you relates to requirements for PPE and SCBAs including the applicability to training scenarios. There has been a great deal of work by the Fire Fighter Advisory Committee so they can provide the commissioners the best information possible so we can make good decisions on behalf of all Texas firefighters. It is our goal to help provide the highest level of safety for each of our members.

Mike Jones from Burleson L-4025 serves as the vice chair for the commission. He and I are the two commissioners representing the TSAFF, and we both encourage you to come down for one or more of our quarterly meetings. Whether you can make a meeting in person or not, we are both just a phone call away if we can help you with anything related to the TCFP.

↓ The TCFP recently held three days of PPE training in Fort Worth. The compliance team interacted with attendees of the TCFP quarterly meeting and partners of the fire service.



TSAFF Peer Support Contacts

The TSAFF Peer Support Team includes firefighters from all six Texas districts who have been trained in providing emotional and mental health support to our union brother and sister firefighters in the state of Texas. TSAFF Peer Supporters have all received IAFF and TSAFF training. The team provides assistance to active and retired firefighters experiencing behavioral health issues.



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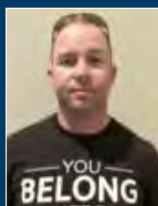
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TAFPAC



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McKINNEY L-2661 - Steve Dorris

MISSION L-3609 - Leroy Garcia, Robert Lopez

ODESSA L-1665 - Tyler Houchin

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PORT ARTHUR L-397 - Patrick McCorvy

WOODLANDS L-3846 - Erik Secrest, Richard Smith

PFFOK - Michael Korb

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