

GAFC FIRESIDE

Volume 6 # 2
May, 2011

1/2 Reduction in AFG Program



by: **President David Kimbrell**

Despite the past success of AFG grants given to Georgia Fire Departments, there is a clear and definite need to keep the programs funded. Consider the following statistics from the October 2006, U.S. Fire Administration report entitled "Four Years Later – A Second Needs Assessment of the U.S. Fire Service:"

An estimated two-thirds (66%) of departments have at least some personal protective clothing that is at least 10 years old.

An estimated 65% of fire departments do not have enough portable radios to equip all emergency responders on a shift. The percentage of departments that cannot provide radios to all emergency responders on a shift is highest for communities under 2,500 population.

Please see page 2.

JEOPARDIZED!

Assistance to Firefighter Grant Program Fire and Safer Grants

Historical Perspective

The FIRE grant program was created in 2000 to improve the baseline capabilities of career, volunteer, and combination fire departments. The program uses a merit-based, peer-review process to deliver matching grants directly to local fire departments for lifesaving equipment, training, and fire prevention programs. The program also supports important research for improving the safety of both firefighters and the general public.

The SAFER grant program was created in 2003 to improve the baseline staffing of career, combination, and volunteer departments. This program allows career and combination departments to hire firefighters over a five-year period, and allows volunteer fire departments to set up recruitment and retention programs. This program also uses a merit-based, peer-review process to deliver funding to local fire departments. For FY 2009, FY 2010, and FY 2011, Congress waived some of the requirements to the SAFER grant program to allow firefighters to be rehired and retained.

On May 24, the House Appropriations Committee considered an amendment to restore funding for the FIRE and SAFER grant programs. This amendment lost in committee by a vote of 21-26. Here's how the Georgia members of the House Appropriations Committee voted:"

HLS Appropriations-Restore funds: Bishop - **Yea** Kingston, Lewis - **Nay**

Kimbrell: More on AFG Grants . . .

- **Congress appropriated \$405 million each for the FIRE and SAFER grant programs in FY 2011. Now, the House of Representatives is considering a bill that would appropriate only \$200 million for the FIRE grant program and \$150 million for the SAFER grant program in FY 2012. If the funding levels proposed in the House bill become law, it could seriously harm the response capabilities of America's fire service.**

A FEW MORE FACTS

- o An estimated 63% of fire departments involved in wildland firefighting have not provided formal training in those duties to all involved personnel.
 - o An estimated 36% of fire departments involved in delivering emergency medical services (EMS) have not provided formal training in those duties to all involved personnel.
 - o An estimated 36% of fire departments involved in hazardous materials response have not provided formal training in those duties to all involved personnel.
 - o In communities with less than 2,500 population, 21% of fire departments, nearly all-or mostly volunteer departments, deliver an average of 4 or fewer volunteer firefighters to a mid-day house fire.
- **During this current economic crisis, fire departments across the country are being forced to shut down fire stations, cut training budgets, and lay off firefighters. For example, the International Association of Firefighters estimates that there have been 5,000 layoffs that have either happened or are going to happen during this economic downturn.**

On Wednesday, June 1, the House of Representatives will be considering H.R. 2017, the Fiscal Year 2012 Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act. Representatives Steven LaTourette (R-OH) and Bill Pascrell (D-NJ) are offering an amendment to restore funding for the FIRE and SAFER grant programs to \$335 million for each program. Please contact your Representative to ask for support of this amendment.



Pick up a phone and call your Congressman. He probably won't answer but each DC answering machine is waiting to hear from a Georgia Fire Chief. Try this:

Hello! Congressman _____. This is Chief _____ respectfully asking for your vote to keep the Assistance to Firefighters grants fully funded. Thanks!

All area codes for Congressmen are 202 : Kingston 225-5831; Bishop 225-3831, Westmoreland 225-5901; Johnson 225-1605; Lewis 225-3801; Price 225-4501; Woodall 225-4272; Scott (Austin) 225-6531; Graves 225-5211; Broun 225-4101; Gingrey 225-2931; Barrow 225-2823; Scott (David) 225-2939.

GAFC extends special thanks to The International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC), Mark Light, Executive Director and Government Relations and Policy Director Ken LaSala for the factual information contained in this newsletter.