

**Congressional Fire Services Institute / International Association of Fire Chiefs /
International Association of Fire Fighters / National Fire Protection Association /
National Volunteer Fire Council**

June 6, 2012

The Honorable Jon D. Runyan
1239 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Larry Kissell
1632 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Runyan and Congressman Kissell:

On behalf of the nation's fire and emergency services, we write in support of your amendment to H.R. 5855, the Fiscal Year 2013 Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act. The amendment, which provides an additional \$5 million for the Assistance to Firefighters (FIRE) Grant Program and the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant Program, will bring funding for these critical grant programs to the same level they received in Fiscal Year 2012. The FIRE and SAFER grant programs are imperative to addressing the needs of more than one million fire and emergency services personnel, while providing an economic stimulus to American manufacturers and service providers.

Congress created FIRE and SAFER to address the baseline needs of our nation's fire and emergency services. These two highly successful grant programs help ensure that our nation's 30,000 fire departments have the necessary training, equipment and staffing to respond to over 28 million emergency calls annually. Every community across the country relies on our firefighters to respond to a variety of emergency situations – structure fires, medical emergencies, hazardous materials incidents, and wildland/urban interface fires. Both the FIRE and SAFER grant programs improve response capabilities in every one of those emergency response areas, as well as providing funding for crucial fire prevention and safety programs targeted toward high-risk populations.

As the nation's economic challenges continue, local fire departments – both career and volunteer – are being forced to cut services and staffing, placing local communities at greater risk. In addition, departments are forced to postpone purchasing equipment, apparatus, and training and education programs that would otherwise enhance capabilities by bringing their departments into compliance with national voluntary consensus standards. The FIRE and SAFER grant programs provide the means to enhance preparedness and response capabilities nationwide to all types of hazards – capabilities that are utilized everyday by our nation's firefighters and emergency services personnel. Hence, the federal investment is not only needed, but also justified.

We remain grateful for your leadership in ensuring that America's fire and emergency services are prepared to protect the public from all hazards – both natural and manmade. Best wishes for your continued success and safety.

Sincerely,

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