



Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) Program Appropriations

- **Request: Restore AFG funding in FY 2025 to \$405 million**

- **What is AFG?**

AFG is a competitive grant program that provides matching funds in the form of direct grants to fire departments and non-fire-based EMS agencies to help them reach a baseline level of preparedness. Through AFG, local departments receive funding to purchase training, equipment and apparatus as well as pay for health and safety programs.

- **How does AFG work?**

AFG funding is allocated based on grant criteria that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) establishes and updates each year after convening a group of stakeholders from national fire service organizations like the NVFC to provide formal input. By law, at least 25 percent of AFG funding must go to each of volunteer, combination and career fire departments, respectively. FEMA then convenes peer review panels comprised of firefighters from across the country who volunteer their time to rank grant applications. This collaborative process ensures that AFG funds are spent effectively.

- **Why is AFG important?**

National needs assessment studies consistently show that agencies serving small communities lack up-to-date equipment and training by wide margins compared with fire departments serving larger, more densely-populated communities. AFG is a lifeline for many volunteer fire departments that would be unable to purchase necessary apparatus, equipment and training without it. As costs continue to rise, it is a struggle for many departments to afford to replace worn out gear and keep up with rising training requirements.

- **Why is restoring AFG funding critical?**

Since FY 2009, overall funding for AFG has been reduced from \$565 million to \$324 million in FY 2024. The National Volunteer Fire Council was very disappointed to see Congress cut AFG funding by 10% in FY 2024 alone. FEMA received \$3.9 billion in FY 24 AFG grant applications. That is over 13x more in requests than the \$290 million available for funding.

Since FY 2010 support for volunteer departments through AFG has been cut substantially. Meanwhile, equipment has become more expensive. Since 2019, the average cost for turnout gear has increased by approximately 35-40%, while the cost of fire self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) has increased by around 32% according to the most recent industry analyses. The combination of reduced funding and increased costs has made getting a grant very challenging.

According to the National Fire Protection Association's (NFPA) most recent Fire Service Needs Assessment, there are major challenges providing firefighters with personal protective clothing (PPC) and personal protective equipment (PPE). In fact, more than half of all fire departments cannot equip all personnel with SCBAs. Providing \$405 million for AFG in FY 2025 would allow FEMA to fund more high quality grant applications from volunteer fire departments.

For more information or questions please contact the NVFC's Chief of Legislative and Regulatory Affairs, Ryan Woodward at Ryan@NVFC.org