

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 19, 2018

The Honorable John Carter, Chairman
House Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
B-307 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Lucille Roybal-Allard, Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Carter and Ranking Member Roybal-Allard:

As you begin to work on the fiscal year 2019 Homeland Security Appropriations bill, we strongly urge you to provide at least \$405 million for the Assistance to Firefighter Grant (AFG) program and \$405 million for the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant program.

Through the Committee's past efforts, we have demonstrated Congress' strong bipartisan support for the AFG Grant program. Since 2001, this program has had a profound impact on public safety by providing nearly \$7 billion for infrared cameras, personal protective gear, hazmat detection devices, improved breathing apparatuses, and interoperable communications systems. This equipment provides our fire departments with the tools they need to effectively respond to all hazards that firefighters may face on any given call.

The SAFER program provides much needed resources to career and volunteer fire departments across the nation, and allows them to hire new firefighters, and also recruit and retain firefighters. This program is critical to thousands of fire stations across the country, many of which are currently operating with limited staff and funding. When adequately funded, SAFER will bring or maintain our nation's fire departments to staffing levels that will improve the safety of our firefighters, as well as the communities they serve, as they respond to the scene of fires, auto accidents, or other natural or manmade disasters. As you well know, the SAFER program complements the very successful AFG program, through which the federal government provides funds for training and equipment for fire departments across the country. Ensuring that career and volunteer departments have adequate numbers of firefighters will allow departments to fully utilize the training and equipment funds provided through the FIRE grant programs.

However, the nearly \$3 billion in applications submitted annually demonstrates that there is a great deal of work that still must be done before our communities are sufficiently served by first responders.

We ask our firefighters and fire responders to risk their lives each day, but too often they are forced to respond with aging equipment, inadequate training, and insufficient staffing. We as a nation have an obligation to provide them with the necessary resources to perform their jobs as safely and effectively as possible. We urge you to help Congress meet that obligation by funding the AFG and SAFER programs at \$405 million each in the FY2019 Homeland Security Appropriations bill.

We thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Raja G. Spichmann

Brian K. Fitzpatrick

Claudia Fenney

Call

Martha McSally

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Joe Soban

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Henry Hech

Jamie Raski

~~_____~~

Fil Vela

Jim [unclear]

Suzanne Bonamici

Ed Lewis

Stacy E. Plackett

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Ryan Costello

Dr. L. M. [unclear]

Mike Donpe

~~_____~~

Will Hurd

A. Donald McEakin

Michelle Lujan Grisham

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Elizabeth H. Esty

Alma Adams

D. J. Sett

Thomas R. Guzzi

Jim Patta

Ted W. Lieu

Daniel J. Keenan

Frank Palley

Uae B. Demunig

Mrs G. Shoo

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Alan McFarlane

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Jim Swabnell

Alan Lowenthal

Glenn 'GT' Thompson

Debbie Dwyll

WAKE DSO

Neal P. [unclear]

Charis Crist

Judy Chu

C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger

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Kathleen Rin

Tom Lindsay

~~Edgar~~

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