

Congressman French Hill (AR-02)
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
Oral Testimony
Date: Wednesday, April 25, 2018

Chairman Carter, Ranking Member Roybal-Allard, and members of the Subcommittee:

I appreciate the opportunity to testify in front of you today in support of funding for the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) and the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Act Grants.

Fire departments need adequate staffing, equipment, and training to keep our communities safe, and these programs have a significant impact on fire departments in my home state of Arkansas.

While I have been in office, Fire Department's in my district have received more than \$3 million in grants. Thirteen individual fire departments have received 19 grant awards.

With the highest award being \$600,000 to North Little Rock and the smallest being \$19,000 to Burnt Ridge.

This shows that even the smallest award changes the lives of those living in the community. With the \$19,000 received by the Burnt Ridge Fire Department, they were able to purchase thermal cameras which is a game changer when responding to serious calls.

Burnt Ridge was also able to purchase a new brush truck. Before they received FEMA funding, they were using a converted 1965 military truck to transport water.

In Arkansas's Second Congressional District, our departments need new Self-contained breathing apparatuses (SCBAs) desperately. Especially in our smaller departments. They're old and outdated and are no longer certifiable under operational standards.

Radios are also a big need. For example, the Little Rock Fire Department currently needs 90 mobile radios and 202 portable radio as a cost of \$1.3 million.

Finally, the departments need turnout cabinets. Fire fighters are putting their lives on the line not just in the immediate risk of bodily harm, but in the increased risks of harmful contaminants. The units cost over \$30,000 each which is over the budget for most of the departments in my district. They need these units to clean their turnout gear after their runs to remove harmful contaminants.

In central Arkansas, we have a strong community spirit and the fire fighters know that if one department is able to purchase one of these turnout cabinets, then the area departments, especially volunteers, will be able to keep their turnout gear safe and well maintained.

Assistance to fire fighter grant funding is necessary for fire departments in my district.

The needs are too great for them to do it alone and we are proud to support them in their applications. These grants have changed communities and makes the area exponentially and unmeasurably safer.

TOTAL: \$3,017,516.00

BY THE NUMBERS:

- **13** Fire Departments have received funding
- **19** awards
- **15** Thermal cameras
- **2** Fire station exhaust systems (to filter the diesel fumes that comes out of the fire trucks)
- **167** Self-contained breathing apparatuses (SCBA's)
- **175** masks
- **250** Air cylinders
- **1** Rescue unit fire truck
- **1** Brush truck
- **1** Water tanker truck
- **1** Turnout cabinet/ washing unit
- **Numerous** Supply hose/attack-line
- **53** Turnout gear
- **1** SCBA testing unit
- **30** Voice amps
- **Numerous** Laptops for emergency vehicles and programing
- **1** RIT (Rapid Intervention) pack
- **148** Wildland Fire fighting gear

This data shows how far this grant money can go, which keeps our communities safer.

Thank you, and I appreciate your consideration.