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Joseph K. Tanner | Fire Chief



February 8, 2024

The Honorable Russell Fry
U.S. House of Representatives
1626 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Fry,

I am Joseph Tanner, the Fire Chief in Horry County, a position I have served in for eight years. Prior to that I spent 31 years with the City of Georgetown Fire Department, serving 17 years as the Fire Chief. As a longtime fire chief and member of the South Carolina Fire Chiefs Association, I fully appreciate and depend on the role that the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) plays in keeping firefighters and all citizens safe.

I am aware of ongoing efforts by NFPA to try to get Congress to pass legislation to preserve copyright protection for their standards and codes. I am writing to you today to request that you support the Pro Codes Act (H.R. 1631) which has been introduced in the House by Representatives Issa and Ross and is pending in the Judiciary Committee.

The Pro Codes Act is supported by major fire service organizations including the International Association of Fire Chiefs, the International Association of Fire Fighters, the Metropolitan Fire Chiefs Association, the National Association of State Fire Marshals, and the National Volunteer Fire Council. The Congressional Fire Services Institute is supporting the bill on behalf of its nearly 40 member organizations.

These efforts are also supported by multiple standards developers including the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE), the International Association of Plumbing and Mechanical Engineers (IAPMO), the International Code Council (ICC), and UL.

Standards and codes may seem like an uninteresting topic but they are very important in helping ensure the buildings we live and work in are as safe as they can reasonably be against fires and other hazards for the entire life of the structure. As a fire chief, I am responsible for not only the public we protect, but also to the firefighters who are the protectors. The day-in and day-out work accomplished by NFPA on the code process makes this a reality.

To this end, we all need to make sure that NFPA can continue to develop and update its standards and codes. Some states and municipalities adopt NFPA's standards and codes into their laws and regulations by referencing the relevant standard or code, referred to as incorporation by reference. There are interest groups who are pushing the idea that when standards or codes are incorporated by reference in this way, NFPA should lose its copyright.

The fact is that NFPA finances the considerable expenses of developing its standards and codes by selling copies of them to builders and others who use them in their line of work. If NFPA loses its copyright to their standards and codes, they will not be able to continue developing them, having a direct impact on the safety of the firefighters in South Carolina, and all those across our entire Nation. This current process utilizes subject matter experts to develop the codes which help protect our citizens and our firefighters, an ability we do not want to lose.

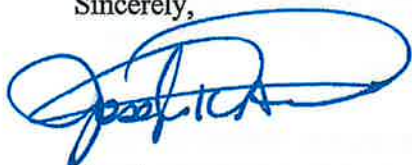
NFPA, a self-funded non-profit, is not selling its standards and codes for a profit. It sells them to continue to finance its mission, which is a benefit to firefighters in South Carolina, our Nation, and the American public we collectively protect.

My hope is that you would be willing to work with NFPA on this legislation to preserve its copyrights. Each day, representatives from local and state governments, the Department of Defense, and all of the Armed Services extensively utilize the NFPA codes and standards and we need to ensure this continues to be available. I support the legislation to allow them to protect a consensus system that has served our nation well for more than 100 years.

I ask that you support the Pro Codes Act for the safety of the citizens of South Carolina, our Great Nation, and the Firefighters who protect them.

In the name of a Fire Safe Nation,

Sincerely,



Joseph K. Tanner
Chief of Department