

Congressman French Hill (AR-02)  
Subcommittee on Homeland Security, Rayburn 2006  
Testimony  
Date: 3:55pm, Wednesday, February 26, 2020

Chairwoman Roybal-Allard, Ranking Member Fleischmann,  
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 since 2015, fire departments in my district have received more than \$7.5 million through these two grant programs. Seventeen individual fire departments have received 30 grant awards.

The highest award was a \$2.6 million SAFER grant to the North Little Rock Fire Department and the smallest award was an \$8,000 AFG grant to the Shaw Fire Department.

This shows that even the smallest award changes the lives of those living in the community. With a small \$19,000 AFG award 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, a small town of less than 300 people, was also able to purchase a new brush truck, which allows the fire department to go off road to fight forest fire. Before they received grant funding, they were using a converted 1965 military truck.

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 Especially in our smaller departments where they are old and outdated and are no longer certifiable under operational standards.

Our departments also 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. Compliant washer/extractors cost over \$12,000 per unit and forced ambient air gear dryers, needed to extend the life of the gear cost over \$10,000 per unit.

This is well over the budget for most of the departments in my district. They need these units to clean their turnout gear after runs in order to remove harmful contaminants.

In central Arkansas, we have a strong community spirit and the firefighters 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 Firefighter and SAFER 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.

TOTALS Received in AR-2 since 2015:

AFG: \$3,628,900.41

SAFER: \$3,968,272.00

BY THE NUMBERS:

- **17** Fire Departments have received funding
- **30** awards
- **15** Thermal cameras
- **2** Fire station exhaust systems (to filter the diesel fumes that comes out of the fire trucks)
- **190** Self-contained breathing apparatuses (SCBA's)
- **339** masks
- **414** Air cylinders
- **1** Rescue unit fire truck
- **1** Brush truck
- **1** ladder truck
- **1** Water tanker truck
- **1** Turnout cabinet/ washing unit
- **Numerous** Supply hose/attack-lines
- **53** Turnout gear

- **2** SCBA testing unit
- **30** Voice amps
- **Numerous** Laptops for emergency vehicles and programing
- **1** RIT (Rapid Intervention) pack
- **148** Wildland Fire fighting gear
- **2,500** tamper proof smoke alarms
- **130** hearing impaired smoke alarms
- **20** Automated External Defibrillators
- **3** Cardiac Monitor/Defibrillators

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

Thank you, and I appreciate your consideration.