



April 27, 2010

The Honorable Joseph I. Lieberman  
Chairman  
Committee on Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Susan M. Collins  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Lieberman and Ranking Member Collins:

The nation's leading fire and emergency services organizations, representing the interests of over one million fire fighters and emergency medical personnel, greatly appreciate your efforts to reauthorize both the Assistance to Firefighters (AFG) and Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant programs. The Fire Grants Reauthorization Act of 2010 is an important step toward maintaining and building upon the capabilities of our nation's fire service.

Both AFG and SAFER continue to provide crucial support to local fire departments nationwide to help assure such departments have the resources they need to operate effectively and safely. Studies conducted by the United States Fire Administration clearly demonstrate that fire departments continue to experience serious unmet needs. These needs, especially when viewed in light of the recent economic downturn, make reauthorizing AFG and SAFER more important than ever.

The bill under consideration makes critical improvements to the AFG and SAFER grant programs, including raising current grant caps, reducing the local match under AFG, significantly simplifying the local match under SAFER, and providing waivers of restrictions under the programs for communities facing significant economic hardship.

While we are pleased that the bill addresses many of the challenges currently facing AFG and SAFER, we continue to have concerns that the bill does not include several significant proposals submitted by the united fire service organizations. We also harbor reservations about proposals to sunset new changes to the programs and impose a new match on certain applicants seeking fire prevention and safety grants, and hope to be able to address these concerns as the bill moves forward.

We appreciate your sustained and diligent efforts to bring the Fire Grants Reauthorization Act to markup and look forward to continue working with you on this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Dr. William F. Jenaway  
President, Board of Directors  
Congressional Fire Services Institute

Harold A. Schaitberger  
General President  
International Association of Fire Fighters

Chief Jeffrey D. Johnson, EFO, CFO, MIFireE  
President and Chairman of the Board  
International Association of Fire Chiefs

James M. Shannon  
President  
National Fire Protection Association

Philip C. Stittleburg  
Chairman  
National Volunteer Fire Council