



National Volunteer Fire Council

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December 1, 2006

The Honorable Michael Chertoff
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Chertoff:

I am writing to express my concern over the manner in which the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) program and the Fire Prevention and Safety (FP&S) grants (a subset of AFG) have been administered this year. As you know, these grants are crucial to the preparedness of America's fire service and ensuring the efficacy of these programs has been and continues to be a top priority for the NVFC.

In most years, AFG award announcements begin in July and are nearly complete by the end of the year. This year, award announcements didn't begin until October and at this point only about a third of the grants have been awarded. I have been assured by officials at DHS that despite the late start that the announcements will be completed in a time frame similar to that of past years and I am hopeful that this will happen.

It was recently announced that the FP&S grant application period, which traditionally opens in September, will open on December 4. DHS' website maintained into the month of October that the FP&S grant application period would open in September. For more than a month after that the website maintained in a message dated 9/3/06 that the application period would open in "forthcoming weeks." The NVFC is asked every year to provide experts to review the applications and rank them based on merit. Because the application period was moved back and we were not informed about it in a timely fashion, many of our members had made travel plans and actually had nonrefundable plane tickets purchased for them which could not be used.

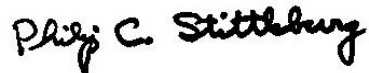
I am frustrated by the fact that both of these programs are several months behind where they would be in a normal year. I am equally frustrated that DHS did not communicate to stakeholder organizations like the NVFC that there would be such a significant delay, provide a timeframe for approximately how long the delay would last, or let us know what was causing the delay. We have worked closely with DHS in the past to help support and administer these programs and like to think of our relationship with the Department as a partnership. The lack of

communication regarding AFG and FP&S damages DHS' credibility as a partner and calls into question the Department's commitment to administering the programs.

I would appreciate it if you could answer a few questions that are extremely important to our membership and emergency responders across the country. Why did the AFG award announcements begin and the FP&S application period open so late this year? What steps is DHS taking to ensure that this situation doesn't occur again next year? Do you anticipate that the FY 2007 AFG application period will open later than it has in past years?

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me directly or contact Dave Finger, Director of Government Relations for the NVFC, at (202) 887-5700, ext. 12, dfinger@nvfc.org. I look forward to having an opportunity to work with you in the future.

Sincerely,



Philip C. Stittleburg
Chairman

Cc: President George W. Bush
Under Secretary George W. Foresman
Congressman Curt Weldon
Senator Joseph Biden
Senator John McCain
Senator Paul S. Sarbanes
Congressman Robert E. Andrews
Congressman Sherwood Boehlert
Congressman Steny Hoyer