



Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA) Grant Program Appropriations

Request: Provide a minimum of \$23 million for VFA in FY 2027

What is VFA?

VFA is a grant program that provides funding to rural fire departments on a 50/50 cost share basis to pay for training, equipment, and protective clothing to help them prepare for wildland fires. VFA is administered by the U.S. Forest Service and funds are distributed by state forestry agencies. In FY 2025, the VFA program provided aid to over 8,000 rural communities, trained more than 12,000 firefighters, expanded or organized 13 fire departments, and provided 3,800 grants totaling over \$15.3 million to these departments for the purchasing, rehabilitating, or maintaining of critical equipment.

Why is VFA important?

More than 80 percent of initial attacks on wildland fires in the United States are provided by volunteer fire departments that frequently lack the financial resources to adequately equip and train their firefighters. The U.S. Forest Service estimates that the wildland fire suppression services provided by local fire departments are worth approximately \$36 billion annually.

Unfortunately, national fire service needs assessment studies consistently show that agencies serving small communities lack up-to-date equipment and training by wide margins compared with fire departments serving larger, more densely populated communities. When local fire departments are unable to suppress wildland fires during the initial phase, the fires spread, and state and federal firefighters are deployed. This is an extremely expensive process that can cost the federal government anywhere from hundreds of millions to billions of dollars in fire suppression costs in a single year depending on the severity of the fire season.

Why should VFA be funded at \$23 million?

The costs of wildland fire suppression are increasing as commercial and residential development pushes further into the wildland/urban interface (WUI). Providing \$23 million for VFA in FY 2027 would ensure adequate capacity to respond to wildland fires, reducing the risk to communities, people, homes, property, and firefighters.

For more information or questions please contact the NVFC's Chief of Legislative and Regulatory Affairs, Ryan Woodward at Ryan@NVFC.org