



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS

HAROLD A. SCHAITBERGER
General President

THOMAS H. MILLER
General Secretary-Treasurer

April 4, 2014

The Hon. Rodney Frelinghuysen, Chair
Subcommittee on Defense
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

The Hon. Pete Visclosky, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Defense
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman and Mr. Ranking Member:

On behalf of the more than 300,000 professional fire fighters and emergency medical personnel, including roughly 4,000 civilian fire fighters working on military installations, I urge your opposition to proposals being discussed on Capitol Hill which would slash the Department of Defense (DoD) civilian workforce over the next 10 years by over 100,000 jobs. If implemented, these proposals would cost taxpayers millions of dollars each year, as well as jeopardize the safety of our military personnel and their families.

The Department of Defense mandates that fire departments on military installations comply with industry standards for minimum safe staffing levels. These minimum staffing levels not only ensure a fire department can operate effectively, they also protect the safety of fire fighters. If the number of civilian fire fighters is reduced, those positions would have to be backfilled by either military personnel or private sector contractors. Both options have been consistently proven to be more costly than staffing fire departments with federal civilian workers.

In addition to being more costly, replacing civilian fire fighters with military or private sector contractors would significantly undermine fire department capabilities. Civilian fire fighters are trained for the unique hazards they face on a daily basis, and are certified to respond to the full range of emergencies, including hazardous materials incidents, rescue operations and emergency medical care. While military fire fighters have been highly trained to perform their specialized duties, neither military nor private contract firefighters possess the training needed to protect people and property on large military installations.

In short, arbitrarily reducing the number of civilian fire fighters would cost more and provide less. While we fully appreciate the difficulty in reducing the Defense budget, we urge you to avoid simplistic solutions such as across the board reductions in civilian personnel that would do nothing to reduce spending.

Thank you for your consideration, and your continued support of the nation's fire service.

Sincerely,

Harold A. Schaitberger
General President