

WSCFF and the Federal Fire Fighter

The Washington State Council of Fire Fighters (WSCFF) is the association representing more than 7000 affiliated members and retired members of the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) within the state. It has been in existence since September 1, 1939, and was created primarily to give organized firefighters a unified voice in the political and legislative processes. The WSCFF coordinates the efforts of the professional firefighters and paramedics of Washington.

The WSCFF works to provide the best possible working conditions, the safest work environment, and the fairest wages and benefits to fulfill the needs of the men and women in this profession. The council is active on local and national fronts with regard to issues that affect its members.

The Federal Fire Fighter is governed by decisions made at the Federal Congressional level (IE: pay, work hours, staffing requirements, presumptive disability, etc). The State of Washington has 9 House Districts and 2 Senators. While Senators represent persons across the whole state, Congressman only represent a small area within the state. Our department has constituents in only 3 of the 9 districts. What this means is that even though all Congressional members (over 535 of them) may vote on our issues we can only lobby those whom are our representatives (a total of 3 Congressmen and 2 Senators). This doesn't give us much of a chance of ever getting any legislative issues taken seriously on the floor. Our government at the State level affects our families, schools, taxes, municipal fire departments, mutual aid agreements, transportation, roads and more.

The WSCFF regularly meets with State and Federal Congressional leaders, employs a full time Legislative director and has constituents in every district within the state. What this means is that they are the voice and drive to aiding in the passing of federal legislative issues by providing the numbers and the constituents across the state to make our voice and vote count. The WSCFF also regularly meets with and coordinates with other state councils to share information on issues that need addressing. This would give us a voice in states where there aren't any federal fire fighters at all.

What does that mean for the Federal Fire Fighters? The on-going political relations enjoyed by the WSCFF through their hard work over the decades have become a great asset for the Federal Fire Fighter. Every year when we converge on Washington DC to push our legislative issues in the House of Representatives, it is the 50+ members of the WSCFF that lobby on our behalf.

- Political connection and additional lobbying efforts
- Coordinated information sharing
- Benevolent fund benefits for member's families
- Scholarship fund (\$25,000 given away to members children last year)
- Legal access/assistance (wills, power of attorneys)

- Dental discounts
- Life insurance
- The WSCFF holds an annual convention where delegates from member locals gather to decide the goals and objectives and to elect officers of the WSCFF. Elections are held each year for the office of vice president. All other officers have two-year terms.
- The WSCFF also hosts a legislative conference every January in Olympia. Firefighters convene to learn about the legislative agenda for the year and to lobby their legislators.
- Each spring, the WSCFF co-hosts an educational seminar with the IAFF to educate local members about collective bargaining, pensions, labor relations, etc.
- The WSCFF has a disability program for long term &/or short term disability. The program is run through Dimartino Associates and covers an individual for on or off the job injuries. While we already have coverage for on the job injuries through OWCP or L&I, we currently, don't have any off the job injury coverage. The short-term coverage starts at 30 days and goes to 180 days. The long-term coverage is from 180 days and goes to retirement age. Cost is based on income and plan chosen. The whole union would have to choose one coverage plan as a group and all individuals would participate (or none would), so it would have to be voted on once choosing to join.
- The WSCFF are members of the Washington Labor Council, members of the AFL-CIO, have an extensive Political Action Committee and fund, provide in state training for affiliate leaders, employ resident experts, have extensive legal contacts, and provide a great networking outlet for fire fighters and their issues or concerns. With the 16th district spread out and our leaders out of state, we have in state persons available for emergencies that may arise that require negotiation, consultation, and/or advice.
- The Washington State Council of Fire Fighters (WSCFF) has established the Medical Expense reimbursement plan to provide one more piece of financial support during your retirement. By participating in this plan, you are proactively planning for your retirement by funding for the continually increasing expense of retiree medical insurance. The Trust's assets are professionally managed to provide the best possible earnings in line with the Trust's mission. By Federal Law, all monies that flow into the account must be paid out for benefits and administrative expenses only. By contributing pre-tax dollars and earning interest on those dollars (money that also won't be taxable income), you substantially increase your investment through this program. Further, when you begin receiving benefits in the future, they will not be taxed – unlike pension payments, which are taxed. In contrast to similar programs sponsored by insurance companies, any profits realized by the Trust will be returned to the program to enhance benefits or lower premiums.

- Supplemental disability plans have been provided by the WSCFF for many years. We offer three plans that include short-term disability (STD), long term disability (LTD) and a combination of both short and long term.
- Professional license plate

There is much more to the word “UNION” than a red sticker. We all rely on, learn from, and support one another. They rely on the relationship just as much if not more than we do. The federal fire fighter has help to set the standards they strive to meet and they have created the benefits and coverage we hope to receive. Most of our current legislative issues are based on parity with the State Association. Turning our backs on our brethren over mere pennies a day would be devastating to our political and professional relationships.