



March 14, 2025

The Honorable Rand Paul
Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland
Security & Governmental Affairs
340 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC, 20510

The Honorable Brian Babin
Chairman
House Committee on Science, Space, and
Technology
2321 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Gary Peters
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland
Security & Governmental Affairs
340 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC, 20510

The Honorable Zoe Lofgren
Ranking Member
House Committee on Science, Space, and
Technology
2321 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Paul, Chairman Babin, Ranking Member Peters, and Ranking Member Lofgren:

The undersigned fire and emergency services organizations representing our nation's approximately 1.2 million fire and EMS personnel and related industries write today to request that you work with the Administration to reopen the United States Fire Administration's (USFA) National Fire Academy (NFA) as quickly as possible. For over 50 years, NFA has provided specialized training courses and advanced management programs to middle- and top-level fire officers, fire service instructors, technical professionals, and representatives from allied professions in all 50 states.

On March 7, 2025, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) canceled all in-person classes at the NFA, as well as NFA-supported classes in the states. The cancellations were reportedly part of an effort to "review agency programs and spending to align with

Administration priorities.”¹ We recognize and appreciate the importance of evaluating government programs for efficiency and effectiveness, but the abrupt suspension of critical training opportunities and the lack of a timeline for reopening raise significant concerns about the future delivery of NFA education programs.

Each day, the fire service must be prepared to respond to both manmade and natural disasters, including structural fires, wildfires, hurricanes, tornadoes, medical emergency calls, active shooter incidents, hazardous materials incidents, water rescues, and much more. As noted in the National Commission on Fire Prevention and Control’s seminal report, *America Burning*, “Those who bear these responsibilities know that the key to their performance, and the performance of those under them, lies in training.”² It is for this reason that the National Fire Academy was created and has remained such a vital component of fire service readiness and homeland security preparedness today.

Since its establishment by Congress, the NFA has been the epicenter of training for fire and emergency services officers. Similar to the leadership training offered by the military war colleges for military officers, the training provided by NFA is specialized. Beyond its on-campus courses, the NFA also delivers advanced instruction often unavailable at local training facilities, bridging critical knowledge gaps for fire and EMS personnel. The suspension of NFA courses has led to the cancellation of related training sessions at state fire training academies, further compounding the impact on public safety preparedness nationwide. Every day that the NFA is barred from providing services is another day where critical training opportunities are lost.³

We are constantly requiring the American fire service to do more with less. Between 2003 and 2023, fire department response increased by 89 percent. In 2003, departments ran 22.4 million calls; by 2023, that number had grown to 42.4 million calls.⁴ Meanwhile, the costs of gear and equipment continue to rise annually. For reference, new fire engines can cost upwards of a million dollars, while the cost of ladder trucks can exceed \$2 million.⁵ And then there is the cost of outfitting a single firefighter with turnout gear, which can run in the thousands of dollars.⁶ A budget survey by the National Volunteer Fire Council found that approximately 89% of responding volunteer departments had annual budgets of less than a million dollars, including 20% of respondents that had budgets of less than \$50,000.

Given the fiscal environment, it is unsurprising that the National Fire Protection Association reports that “across every response type in the [Fifth Fire Service Needs Assessment Survey], from structural firefighting to active shooter responses, there was fire department personnel reported as being responsible for responding to incidents for which they have not been formally trained or certified.”⁷ The NFA exists to help solve this problem and ensure that all fire and EMS personnel have the training they need.

¹<https://www.firerescue1.com/national-fire-academy/fema-temporarily-cancels-all-in-person-nfa-training>;
<https://www.fireengineering.com/firefighter-training/national-fire-academy-stops-all-in-person-classes-for-budget-review/>

² <https://www.usfa.fema.gov/downloads/pdf/publications/fa-264.pdf>, page 41

³ <https://www.firerescue1.com/fema/this-is-a-travesty-fire-service-leaders-react-to-nfa-training-cancellations>

⁴ www.nfpa.org/education-and-research/research/nfpa-research/fire-statistical-reports/fire-department-calls

⁵ <https://www.fireapparatusmagazine.com/fire-apparatus/ladder-trucks/marietta-oh-fd-receives-new-1-7m-ladder-truck/>

⁶ <https://www.iafc.org/topics-and-tools/resources/resource/cost-to-outfit-a-firefighter>;

<https://www.wspa.com/news/local-news/first-responder-friday-how-much-to-outfit-a-firefighter/>

⁷ <https://www.nfpa.org/education-and-research/research/nfpa-research/fire-statistical-reports/needs-assessment>, EX-11

We appreciate the Administration's focus on finding government efficiencies, but express concern about the disruption of programs that enhance the response capabilities of our nation's firefighters. An educated and prepared fire and EMS workforce is paramount to a safe and resilient society. Therefore, we respectfully request that the current review be conducted in a timely and transparent manner so that America's fire and emergency services can once more access the vital training provided by the NFA.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter, and we greatly appreciate your leadership in supporting America's fire and emergency services.

Sincerely,

American Fire Sprinkler Association
Center for Campus Fire Safety
Center for Public Safety Excellence
Common Voices
Congressional Fire Services Institute
Cumberland Valley Volunteer Firefighters Association
Fire and Emergency Manufacturers and Services Association
Fire Apparatus & Emergency Equipment
Fire Apparatus Manufacturers' Association
Fire Department Instructor Conference
Fire Department Safety Officers Association
Fire Equipment Manufacturers' Association - Government Relations Committee
FireEngineering
Firefighter Nation
Firehouse
FireRescue1
IMSA Educational Foundation
Institute of Fire Engineers - USA Branch
International Association of Fire Chiefs
International Association of Fire Fighters
International Association of Wildland Fire
International Code Council
International Fire Buffs Associates
International Fire Marshals Association
International Fire Service Training Association
International Society of Fire Service Instructors
Journal of Emergency Medical Services
National Association of State Fire Marshals
National Board on Fire Service Professional Qualifications
National Fallen Firefighters Foundation
National Fire Sprinkler Association
National Volunteer Fire Council
North American Fire Training Directors
SFPE Foundation
USA Sprinkler Fitters
Women in Fire