

Senate Resolution 6

Recruitment and Retention Committee

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8/14/2018

SR 6 – Recruitment and Retention

PROBLEM STATEMENT

There have been numerous media reports on the lack of and reduction of volunteer fire service personnel in Pennsylvania. All such reports suggest a significant exodus of member and inability to effectively recruit. Despite efforts by multiple groups, the trend continues. This is exasperated by the fact that EMS personnel are experiencing burnout, and paid staff of both fire and EMS are “jumping” organizations for improved salary, benefits, or working conditions, creating turnover, training and performance problems. THE REALITY IS, FEWER TRAINED PERSONNEL ARE RESPONDING TO REQUESTS FOR EMERGENCY SERVICE, THUS CHALLENGING OVERAL SYSTEM PERFORMANCE.

SUPPORTING REFERENCES

This is not a new problem of phenomenon. It was recognized as far back as 2004 in the “Pennsylvania Senate Resolution 60 Report”, again in 2007 in the USFA document “Retention and Recruitment for the Volunteer Emergency Services”, and as recently as the 2012 “Firemen’s Association of the State of Pennsylvania Recruitment and Retention Strategic Plan”. The documents made the following critical observations:

1. Recruitment and Retention is a local issue; the needs leadership and challenges are all local.
2. Recruitment is MARKETING, and you must market ALL OF THE TIME; and a needs assessment is critical to making sure you invest your time appropriately
3. You need to know what your members want as benefits (incentives) before you choose and implement them.
4. Leadership is Key to success in recruiting and retaining personnel. If there is no champion to conduct and manage the recruitment and retention processes locally, the efforts will fail.

These observations hold true today.

COMMENTARY

This committee will involve matters related to attracting and retaining volunteers and paid staff, including but not limited to positive promotion/marketing, incentives, partnerships with educational institutions (include local school districts).

In June of 2018, two members of the SR6 Commission participated in the United States Fire Adminsitration revision workshop of their Volunteer Emergency Responder Retention and Recruitment Manual, incorporating Pennsylvania issues and validating the SR6 approach to Recruitment and Retention.

ACTION STATEMENT

The following items are identified as issues/action items under this category

- Word of mouth is still the most effective way to recruit individuals
- Legislation already in place needs to be “tweaked”
 - Tax credit expansion to 100% option,
 - Include school district and county taxes, etc.
 - PSATS recommends considerations on tax deductions, workers compensation, volunteer relief association programs, taxation and fess assessment restrictions
- VO-Tech training should be implemented in each county to have Public Safety programs as “trade/career” preparatory program, placed in educational system.
- Alternative Funding for fire service and EMS training in high school and community colleges needs to be implemented to reduce burden on volunteer systems and rural communities.
- All departments with colleges in their communities should explore live-in programs
- All departments should explore junior/explorer programs
- Training requirements are chasing candidates away, particularly in rural areas implement risk based training requirements versus minimum of Firefighter I Certification
- Implement blended training for fire and EMS personnel
- Call members who have left to determine why they have left the organization and “re-recruit” them and correct failure.
- A cafeteria plan should be established in each organization to meet the incentive expectations of all members of an organization. Promote the idea of cafeteria plans as recruitment and retention tools – sample plan provided.
- A recruitment and retention plan should be implemented to cross calendar/fiscal periods to assure member needs and expectations are being met.
- Length of Service Award Programs need approval under Relief Association payment (legislation required) and short term Service Award Programs need to be funded for “non-life” members
- An elected official training program should be developed and implemented to enable improved understanding and relationships of fire/EMS as public safety community infrastructure and responsibility of local government.

- Training on leadership and recruiting is needed. Can include best practices from throughout the state.
- Review NY State Recruiting Program with Convenience Stores and develop a mirror program
- Develop a single state wide recruiting tool, video/PSA, ad, and website (www.recruitpafire-ems.com)?
- High School Training – gain consensus that training high school personnel to be firefighters and EMTs is a life skill as well as a potential community service, as well as a potential job. Work with Department of Education and Department of Labor & Industry to engrain and maintain this into all high schools (Co-op program).
- College level program – credit bearing (research course?) – possibly start the concept with Duane Hagelgans at Millersville University – students volunteer and receive credit for research or activity performed as community service.
- Meet with Universities (Pitt, Penn State, Temple) to have a competitive program to develop marketing tools and program to recruit fire and EMS personnel for use in PA, with top programs receiving recognition of some form.
- We are chasing people away with
 - Required time involvement
 - Extensive minimum training requirements
 - Government/FC/EMS conflicts remain challenging (joint municipal/VFC leadership training)
 - Leadership/cliques
- College Loan Forgiveness Program, details to be defined.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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PROPOSED NEXT STEPS

LEGISLATIVE		ADMINISTRATIVE/LOCAL	
<u>Action Item</u>	<u>Cost/ Funding Source*</u>	<u>Action Item</u>	<u>Cost/ Funding Source*</u>
Single statewide focal point/individual for R&R In State Fire Commissioner Office - website - ad & support material - local support - best practices - develop & implement word or mouth program	\$200,000/year 1	Develop and implement statewide recruitment & retention leadership training program	\$40,000 3
Work with Department of Education to develop a viable High School and college level credit awarding program to encourage volunteer fire and EMS work. May require a legislative “fix”	None	Provide guidance on development of cafeteria plans for recruiting and retaining members	None
Local Tax Credit bill modification needed - Local Tax credit option to 100% from 20% - Include school district and county taxes	None Requires support of various municipal groups	Develop and release an elected official training program on fire/EMS recruitment and retention needs and techniques	\$15,000 3
High School Training – gain consensus that training high school personnel to be firefighters and EMTs is a life skill as well as a potential community service, as well as a potential job. Work with Department of Education to engrain this into all high schools	Minimal 3	Reach out to WAWA, Sheets, and Rutters for possible joint FF/EMS recruitment campaign in their stores	\$100,000 3
College level program – credit bearing (research course?) – possibly start the concept with Duane Hagelgans at Millersville University – students volunteer and receive credit for research or activity performed as community service.	Minimal 3		
Create a Loan Forgiveness Program for active fire/EMS personnel to attend a Pennsylvania University at any level, community, undergraduate, graduate.	TBD Cost not as much as anticipated as classes would be conducted anyway 4		

Meet with Universities (Pitt, Penn State, Temple, (PASSHE), and the Pennsylvania Community College System, to have a competitive program to develop marketing tools and program to recruit fire and EMS personnel for use in PA, with top programs receiving recognition of some form.	Minimal 3			
Permit payment of LOSAP and other benefit programs for member from Relief Association funds.	Minimal 3			
Redefine minimum age to complete firefighter training to 16, consistent with other Vo-Tech type training	Minimal, mostly discussion & negotiations with various agencies			
Work with community college and state university system on enabling free tuition for active fire/EMS personnel, and encouraging live-in programs at local stations	Minimal, mostly discussion & negotiations with various agencies			

* 1 = From the Grant Program (reduce amount of each grant by \$100 = \$200,000 +/- fund

2 = From an amount taken from the Fireworks Tax

3 = From Gaming/Marcellus Shale Tax

4 = General Budget

Cafeteria Plan Concept

(to be used as a starting point for discussions and planning)

<p>Age Range 15-21</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Logo wear (attire), FD License plate, decal, etc.• Fellowship• Cash items (gas card, gift card) – Maximum \$500• Learn a skill or knowledge• Scholarship/Tuition• Live in program• Others as deemed appropriate locally
<p>Age Range 22-35</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Logo wear (attire) T-shirt, FD License plate, decal, etc.• Fellowship• FD License plate, decal, etc.• Cash items (gas card, gift card, stipend) – Maximum \$500• Accident and Sickness Insurance• Investment Program or LOSAP Program• Scholarship/Tuition• Live in program• Others as deemed appropriate locally (e.g. gear, equipment, etc. as earned awards)
<p>Age Range 36-50</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Logo wear (attire)• FD License plate, decal, etc.• Cash items (gas card, gift card, stipend) – Maximum \$500• Accident and Sickness Insurance• Investment Program or LOSAP Program• Tax Rebates• Others as deemed appropriate locally (e.g. gear, equipment, etc. as earned awards)
<p>Age Range 51-65</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Logo wear (attire)• FD License plate, decal, etc.• Cash items (gas card, gift card, stipend) – Maximum \$500• Accident and Sickness Insurance• Investment Program or LOSAP Program• Recognition• Tax Rebates• Others as deemed appropriate locally (e.g. gear, equipment, etc. as earned awards)
<p>Age Range 66+</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Logo wear (attire)• FD License plate, decal, etc.• Cash items (gas card, gift card, stipend) – Maximum \$500• Accident and Sickness Insurance• Investment Program or LOSAP Program• Tax Rebates• Recognition• Others as deemed appropriate locally (e.g. gear, equipment, etc. as earned awards)

Sample Recruitment and Retention Cafeteria Plan – courtesy VFIS