



**TESTIMONY BY
THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE ASSOCIATION OF
TOWNSHIP SUPERVISORS**

**BEFORE THE
SENATE VETERANS AFFAIRS
AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS COMMITTEE**

ON

RISING CAUSE OF FIRE APPARATUS

PRESENTED BY

**JERRY OZOG
PUBLIC SAFETY SPECIALIST**

**JUNE 8, 2026
HARRISBURG, PA**

Chairman Mastriano, Chair Muth, and members of the Senate Veterans Affairs & Emergency Preparedness Committee:

My name is Jerry Ozog and I am the Public Safety Specialist for the Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on behalf of our member townships.

The Association represents Pennsylvania's 1,453 townships of the second class and is committed to preserving and strengthening township government and securing greater visibility and involvement for townships in the state and federal political arenas. Townships of the second class cover 95% of Pennsylvania's land mass and represent more residents —nearly 6 million Pennsylvanians — than any other type of municipality in the commonwealth.

Volunteer fire companies are the public safety backbone in many Pennsylvania communities and the most successful have an excellent relationship with their local government. For nearly all townships, volunteer fire departments are the primary providers of fire protection.

Townships are a partner in the delivery of fire protection services, and are, in fact, responsible for ensuring that fire service is provided in their community. Townships help fire companies in a variety of different ways including and PSATS is absolutely concerned about the rising cost of fire apparatus and equipment. Volunteer fire departments struggle with adequate funding sources, and townships contributed more than \$222 million to such departments in 2024.

PSATS promotes a collaborative approach between townships and the separate nonprofit fire company. That collaborative approach starts with frequent, respectable, communications. Transparency leads to trust, and a collaborative approach will be the only way to sustain fire services.

Townships have a variety of tools to provide essential funding and support to volunteer fire companies. These tools include providing direct financial appropriation, purchasing and owning the apparatus, and assistance with community engagement and support. Current funding tools are limited to a dedicated property tax of up to 3 mills for fire purposes, at least 25% of the local services tax (*levied on individuals that work in the township*) which must be used for public safety, and donations from the general fund. Currently, a township that wants to levy a higher fire tax can only increase this amount by referendum, which is a time-consuming and inflexible process.

We are aware of fire companies keeping apparatus longer than expected and opting for refurbishment rather than replacement. Some communities in Pennsylvania will never be able to afford a brand-new apparatus due to current costs and funding constraints.

Some immediate steps to addressing this problem could include increasing support for the current fire and EMS grant program and loan program. Townships need creative, flexible tools to ensure that they can uphold the critical role of first responder. Pennsylvania is diverse so rigid,

one-size fits-all solutions are bound to fail. Instead, providing options that allow local governments to work together to maximize the effective delivery of services should be the goal.

At PSATS 2026 conference, our member townships adopted resolutions asking for the following menu of options for funding fire protection, which would help make dedicated funding available for the provision of fire protection services:

- Increase the cap on the fire tax from 3 mills to 10 mills or remove it entirely. This would give townships the option to increase their support for fire services over the current 3 mill cap if the elected board deems it necessary to adequately provide for fire protection. Act 54 of 2024 increased these caps to 10 mills for the fire tax but only for municipalities in Bucks, Delaware, and Montgomery counties. PSATS supports HB 393, which would make this adjustment statewide, and has passed the House.
- Amend the Second Class Township Code to provide boards of supervisors with expanded funding options for EMS and fire protection, including authorization to establish and bill a reasonable service fee for these services.
- Authorize fire companies to collect reimbursement from insurance companies for expenses incurred while responding to and cleaning up automobile accidents and other emergency incidents on both state and local roads, as rescue efforts take up a significant amount of time. Insurance companies should also be required to reimburse fire companies for itemized expenses incurred while responding to a structure fire. The Office of State Fire Commissioner should publish a list of eligible rates for reimbursement.
- Require state and federal facilities to pay a municipal services fee to their host municipality to offset the costs of public safety services.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important issue.