



The following is a brief synopsis of the measures included in the Firefighter/EMS support package.



## Measures to support our firefighters

***School District/Community College Training Partnerships:*** Several community colleges are partnering with local schools to offer courses for those students who would like to become first responders. We plan to replicate these partnerships through a pilot program.

***College Loan Forgiveness for First Responders:*** In the 1970's, Pennsylvania had 300,000 volunteer fire fighters. Unfortunately, our most recent estimate totals a mere 50,000. Like the nursing shortage in the 1990's, we believe that providing college loan forgiveness to volunteer first responders will help attract and maintain more individuals to this calling.

***Full-Time Equivalency – Community College Training Funding:*** Restoration of dedicated state funding for training for Fire and EMS personnel.

***Online Training:*** First responders go through an inordinate amount of training. Directing the State Fire Commissioner to establish online training for non-hands-on training will save fire companies and first responders a great deal of time and money.

***Employer Tax Credits for Firefighters:*** Encourages employers, through tax credits, to permit employees who are active volunteers to leave work, with pay, in response to an emergency or to participate in training.

***CPAs and Fire Companies:*** Establishes a four-year continuing professional education pilot program that provides credits to certified public accountants who assist volunteer fire companies with their financial records.

***PTSD Training:*** In an effort to curb the growing problem of suicide within the first responder community, we are creating an Emergency Workers Mental Health Commission. Additionally, we would like to combat the effects of PTSD in our first responders, directly at the source through counseling and require post-traumatic stress disorder training for all first responders.

***Fire Company Billing:*** Authorizes volunteer fire companies to bill for “actual and reasonable costs,” which does not include manpower. This would allow fire companies to recoup the costs for responding to emergencies.

***Use of Fire Relief Funding:*** Expands the allowable uses of relief monies for mini-retirement programs, known as Length of Service Award Programs (LOSAP).

***Fire Relief Fund Administration:*** Would empower the State Fire Commissioner to oversee Fire Relief Fund administration, a duty currently held by the Auditor General. The Auditor General was charged with this duty prior to the creation of the State Fire Commissioner.

***Review of the Statewide Insurance Fund:*** Since the enactment of the Cancer Presumption Law, the Statewide Insurance Fund has become the de facto insurer of municipalities/fire companies and the complaints have been numerous. Hearings to explore this issue will be held.

***Volunteer Loan Assistance Program (VLAP):*** It is our intent to open up this program to career fire companies (two-percent low interest loans for buildings, apparatus and equipment).

## **Measures to support EMS organizations**

***Treat, no Transport:*** Require insurance companies to reimburse EMS agencies for services provided, even if transport to a hospital does not take place. Currently, if an EMS company does not transport, it does not receive any reimbursement for any services provided.

***MA Reimbursement:*** Medical Assistance reimbursements are well below the cost to provide EMS and many commercial insurers reimburse at the Medicare level or slightly above. MA reimbursement is below Medicare rates as well. Payment policies should be changed to reflect the evolving and beneficial nature of EMS.

***EMSOF Fine Increases:*** Increase the \$10 and \$25 fines that support the Emergency Medical Services Operating Fund. There has been no uniform increase in either fine since 1985, yet this revenue provides 30 percent of the money utilized for the training of EMTs and paramedics in rural regions that are identified as underserved and struggling areas.

***Realign the \$30 million Fire/EMS Grant Program:*** Under the \$30 million Fire and EMS Grant Program, EMS organizations receive 12 percent and fire companies receive 88 percent of the funding. Should additional funding be secured, more parity will be sought for EMS.