

September 1, 2017

Mr. Harold A. Schaitberger
General President
International Association of Firefighters
1750 New York Ave., N.W.
Washington, DC 20006-5395

Dear General President Schaitberger,

On behalf of our nationwide membership and in fact all federal firefighters across America, I wanted to express our heartfelt appreciation to you for your letter dated July 28, 2017 to the members of the U.S. House of Representatives as it relates to President's Budget proposal to make significant changes to the Federal Employee Retirement System (FERS) that would adversely impact our Nation's federal firefighters.

The President's meager proposal for a federal employee pay increase coupled with his ignorant, anti-federal workforce proposals shouldn't surprise us. For decades some in the White House and in the Halls of congress have used the federal workforce as a scapegoat implying that it is the sole factor in our Nation's staggering budget deficits. As you certainly know, federal employees do not have the Right to negotiate pay & benefits as many of your other municipal & state members do. This of course allows the federal workforce to be considered an easy target for some in Washington and places a perpetual target on their backs when it comes to pay & benefits.

As I'm sure Jim has seen over the years with DoD and other agency federal firefighters, the FWFSa has seen its fair share of federal wildland firefighters leave the federal system for better pay & benefits. Our goal at the FWFSa has always been to advance reforms through the administrative/legislative processes to not only protect and enhance the benefits these brave men & women earn as federal firefighters, but to ensure proper recognition of our Nation's federal wildland firefighters and to improve recruitment and retention of these inherently less costly fire resources.

Since I became president of IAFF Local F-57 in 1994, I have spent the last 23+ years working on behalf of all federal firefighters. As you might imagine, as a political advocacy employee association it is incumbent upon the FWFSa to work with several national unions that represent some of the 20,000+ land management agency firefighters employed by the DOI & USDA. That can be a challenge when these national unions also represent many other occupations within their bargaining units and cannot put as much time and effort into their "firefighter" issues as we can.

Sadly the coverage and thus the representation and effort by some national unions on National Forests and other federal lands can be sporadic at best. It remains one of our goals to educate those unions as to the unique issues facing their land management agency

firefighters and to address some of the inherent obstacles facing our federal firefighters in the Federal OWCP arena which I'm sure Jim can attest to is a nightmare all by itself.

Eight years ago, in the spring of 2009 I made an attempt to meet with you in Washington to discuss sweeping legislation that was to be introduced in the House of Representatives on behalf of federal wildland firefighters later that year. My attempt, and trip to Washington came just 3 weeks after undergoing quadruple bypass open heart surgery. You replied that you could not meet with me because the FWFSa had been declared a rival organization. Despite repeated requests by the FWFSa, neither the IAFF nor the CPF have ever extended the courtesy of explaining what egregious act we committed to earn our place as a rival organization despite many of us having given our hearts and souls, not to mention a lot of money, to the IAFF over many years.

To date, many 16th District members and even those in other districts who our members work with and interact with each wildfire season say they have never heard of any such action being taken against us let alone knowing what we did to earn that wrath. That said, even though we are a fraction of the size of the IAFF, we have grown to a size that would have become the largest 16th district local in the Country.

I guess my point is that even though you may consider us insignificant, given the demographics of those we work with and who are carrying our political water in DC, we've often felt we could bring a variety of congressional folks to the table on the IAFF's issues that may have traditionally been considered unfriendly or out of touch by the IAFF. We've never sought to have people mention the FWFSa in the same breath as the IAFF. However there are still many of us who fought with everything they had for the IAFF and maintain that tenacity if in the future things change.

Before you were elected General President in Chicago, our band of "West Coast" federal firefighters did as much, if not more than anyone else in the 16th District to secure the passage of the Federal Firefighter Pay Fairness Act. We secured the likes of Ron Dellums and Bob Dornan as cosponsors on the Hoyer House bill...two extreme opposites on the political spectrum. Despite all the "buddy buddy" relationships between then VP Crouse and many East Coast locals, he picked me to be the only Fed to testify at hearings before the Civil Service Subcommittee on the bill...hearings Kenny Harrell and I secured after years of Fred Nesbitt and the IAFF being unable to do so.

Whether or not you respond to this letter, the FWFSa will continue to support the IAFF's efforts on behalf of our Nation's federal firefighters and thank you again for your on point letter regarding the insulting budget proposals.

Respectfully,

Casey Judd
president

Cc: Jim Johnson, IAFF 16th District V.P.