



Congressional Fire Service Institute Illinois Delegation Report



April 17 – 20, 2018

By Ronald Kubicki - Legislative Liaison NIAFPD

Illinois Delegation Members

Ronald Kubicki – Legislative Liaison Northern Illinois Alliance of Fire Protection Districts

Nick Kosiara – President Northern IL Alliance of Fire Protection Districts

Kathy Haage – Executive Director Northern IL Alliance of Fire Protection Districts

Jim Grady – Executive Director IL Fire Chiefs Association

Mark Puknaitis – 1st Vice President IL Fire Chiefs Association

Colonel Royal Mortenson – Executive Director IL Fire Service Institute

Jim Keiken – Assistant Director IL Fire Service Institute

Mike Mavrogeorge – Chairman IL Fire Service Association

Mike Dillon – President IL Association of Fire Protection Districts

John Buckley – Chief Pleasantview Fire Protection District

Steve Norvilas – Assistant Chief Pleasantview Fire Protection District

Juan Giron – Trustee Pleasantview Fire Protection District

Ronald Kleinhaus – Chief Evergreen Fire Department

Marvin Hill – Trustee Barrington Fire Protection District

Nick Asta – Assistant Chief Barrington Fire Protection District

Joe Leone – Chief Addison Fire Protection District

Erik Kramer – Assistant Chief Addison Fire Protection District

David Palya – Trustee Lockport Fire Protection District

Brian O'Connor – Attorney Ottosen, Britz, Kelly, Cooper, Gilbert & DiNolfo, Ltd.

CONGRESSIONAL FIRE SERVICES CAUCUS

Senate Co-Chairs

Senator Susan Collins (ME) - Chair
Senator Thomas Carper (DE)
Senator John McCain (AZ)
Senator Jon Tester (MT)

House Co-Chairs

Congressman Steny Hoyer (MD-5)
Congressman Peter King (NY-2)
Congressman Bill Pascrell, Jr. (NJ-9)
Congressman David Reichert (WA-8)

CONGRESSIONAL FIRE SERVICES CAUCUS

In 1987 the Congressional Fire Services Caucus was established to educate members of Congress about fire and emergency services. The Caucus was created to be a bipartisan group where Republicans and Democrats could work together to improve the readiness of local first responders and to jointly recognize their valor and dedication. To preserve the bipartisan spirit of the Caucus, the chairmanship rotates every two years between Republican and Democratic members. Previous chairmen include Senators John McCain (AZ), Paul Sarbanes (MD), William V. Roth, Jr. (DE), Joseph Biden (DE), Congressmen Curt Weldon (PA), Steny Hoyer (MD), Sherwood Boehlert (NY), Robert Andrews (NJ), David Reichert (WA), Peter King (NY) and Bill Pascrell, Jr. (NJ).

Today the Fire Caucus is one of the largest caucuses in Congress. The Caucus is not about ideology, but rather respect and support for our nation's first responders. The Congressional Fire Services Caucus unites all members of Congress in support of fire service legislation that benefits all of our nation's fire and emergency services. Acting in a bipartisan manner, the Caucus is dedicated to addressing the needs and challenges of our nation's fire and emergency services. The Caucus serves as a forum for education and discussion on a broad range of issues that impact the readiness and response capabilities of our nation's first responders to all forms of hazards.

Members of Congress can build upon their relationships with local fire service leaders by joining the Fire Caucus. In many instances, members of the fire service are the pillars of a community. They attend the Rotary and Chamber meetings. They organize the blood drives and the Fourth of July picnics. In many smaller communities, the volunteer firefighters are also prominent business leaders. Most importantly, firefighters are among the first on the scene when a disaster strikes.

Joining the Congressional Fire Services Caucus is a win-win proposition for the members of Congress and for the local fire departments. By joining, members are not expected to support an agenda, but rather a cause.



IL Fire Service meeting with IL Senator Richard Durbin

The Congressional Fire Service Institute (CFSI) held its 30th Annual Fire Service Caucus in Washington DC on April 17, 18 and 19, 2018. This year over 5000 fire personal from across the United States converged on our Nation's Capital to meet with their congressional leaders to express to them the importance of the fire service and the issues facing them at home and across the nation.

The Illinois Fire Service was well represented again this year with 19 members attending CFSI. I am so proud of each and every one of these great fire chiefs, assistant chiefs, trustees and Executive Directors. Each and every one of them played a major role in representing the Illinois Fire Service with the utmost respect and professionalism. From our very first meeting on Tuesday to our last meeting on Thursday, I saw great respect shown for our congressional leaders and for the other fire personal attending from across this great nation. I am very proud to report that we were able to meet with 15 Congressmen and Congresswomen from our state. In some cases we had meetings with their staffs. We also met with both of our two senators. We met with Senator Durbin and 6 congressmen in person. We also met with the staffs of Senator Duckworth and 9 other congressmen and women.

Here is a list of those legislators we met with in person:

Senator Richard Durbin

Congressman Daniel Lipinski D-3rd

Congressman Luis Gutierrez D-4th

Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi D-8th

Congressman Brad Schneider D-10th

Congressman Mike Bost R-12th

Congressman John Shimkus R-15th

We also met with the staffs of:

Senator Tammy Duckworth

Congresswoman Robin Kelly D-2nd

Congresswoman Cheri Bustos D-17th

Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky D-9th

Congressman Mike Quigley D-5th

Congressman Peter Roskam R-6th

Congressman Bill Foster D-11th

Congressman Darin LaHood R-18th

The main focus of CFSI this year was first to thank our congressmen and congresswomen for their support of the (AFG) Assistance to Firefighters and (SAFER) Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response Grants. On January 3, 2018 [S.829 and H.R. 3881](#) became law ([AFG & SAFER Program Reauthorization Act](#)) 115-98. It held the funding for these grants at 350 million dollars for next fiscal year, and raising that amount to 405 million after that for 5 years. AFG and SAFER grants have helped a large number of IL Fire Districts and Fire Departments to be able to hire new firefighters and to also have the funds to purchase these new firefighters new gear and equipment to better serve their departments.

[H.R. 931 and SB 382 Firefighter Cancer Registry Act](#): is another issue we pushed. This legislation creates a specialized national registry to provide researchers and epidemiologists with the tools

and resources they need to improve research collection activities related to the monitoring of cancer incidence among firefighters. H.R. 931 passed the house and is now in the senate.

H.R. 1550 Volunteer Responder Incentive Protection Act was introduced by Congressman David Reichert (WA-8) on March 15, 2017 and was introduced into the Senate by Senator Susan Collins (ME) on May 25, 2017. This legislation would exempt from federal income tax any property tax benefit and up to \$600 per year of any other type of benefit that a state or local unit of government provides to volunteer emergency responders as a recruitment or retention incentive.

H.R. 5429 (Siren) Support and improving Rural EMS Needs is another bill that we are tracking. SIREN has passed the house and is now in the senate and our own IL Senator Durbin has picked up the bill and is looking for a republican co-sponsor to give the bill bi-partisan sponsorship. This could be a big boost to the rural fire districts and fire departments in IL. It would help them supply and provide EMS service to areas that may not have the funds to do so.



Congressman Luis Gutierrez with Chief Grady, Trustee Juan Giron, Deputy Chief Steve Norvilas, NIAFPD Legislative Liaison NIAFPD Ronald Kubicki and Chief John Buckley

After we presented all the above issues and a few more issues, we finished up with discussions with Colonel Royal Mortenson the Executive Director of the IL Fire Service Institute at the University of Illinois in Champaign. He is presenting his program to seek federal dollars over the next 8 years to help build a new training facility at the fire service institute. They have chosen a site about three miles south of the present site. The university and local business have been growing so fast that they have surrounded the present site in a way that makes it very hard to have any actual training burns. This project is estimated to cost around 75 million dollars. The institute plans to seek federal funds along with corporate sponsorship in able to build this new site. It might seem like a very bold undertaking, but a very necessary one.

The IL Fire Service Institute is the oldest fire institute in the country-they trained over 62,000 firefighter and fire personnel in 2017 from 100 of the 102 counties in Illinois. They also trained firefighters from 38 other states along with 3 other countries. In 2018 they will be training fire personal from the United States Marines Corps along with personnel from the Capitol police in DC. The IL Fire Service Institute is recognized as one of the best fire training facilities in the United States. It provides a major economic impact for the city of Champaign and to the State of Illinois.



IL Fire Service Meeting with Congressman Brad Schneider



Meeting with the Chief of Staff for Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky



Meeting with the Staff of Congressman Darin LaHood



CFSI/Masimo Excellence in Fire Service-based EMS Award

On Thursday night at the CFSI Awards Dinner the "Illini Emergency Medical Services" received the **CFSI/Masimo Excellence in Fire Service-based EMS Award**.

Colonel Royal Mortenson accepted the award on behalf of the Illini EMS.

What a great honor for the State of Illinois and the Fire Service.



**Colonel Royal Mortenson along with members of the IL Fire Service Delegation
Accepting the “CFSI/Masimo Excellence in Fire Service-based EMS Award”**

Also on Thursday night

Steve Kerber and his United Laboratory team from Northbrook, IL received the
“Senator Paul S. Sarbanes Fire Safety Leadership Award”.

I would like to congratulate both the “Illini Fire EMS” and “Steve Kerber and
United Laboratories Team” on their Awards.



Chief Puknaitis, & Mike Mavrogeorge Congratulating Steve Kerber
On winning the **Senator Paul S. Sarbanes Fire Safety Leadership Award**

In closing, I need to give a special thanks to Chief Mark Puknaitis, Colonel Royal Mortenson, Chief Mike Mavrogeorge and Chief John Buckley for being our presenters at each one of our congressional meeting. These four Chiefs were very professional and made all of us from Illinois very proud. They were able to present our issues in a timely manner that allowed the Senator or Congressman or their staffs to be able to ask questions of the delegation. I would also like to thank the Northern Illinois Alliance of Fire Protection Districts, The Illinois Fire Chiefs Association and The Illinois Association of Fire Protection Districts for all their support over the years. These three associations have been the leaders in presenting our states issues to congress over the past 30 years.

On a personal note, I have been attending the CFSI for 29 of the 30 years. The only one I missed was when I was ill. Over the past 30 years, I have seen such a change in the way our legislators receive us and in the way they are so willing to work on our issues. It makes me so proud to be associated with some of the greatest Fire Chiefs, Trustees and Deputy Chiefs and their staffs from all over our great state and to be able to help support them in their fight to make the IL Fire Service what it is today.

Over that past 30 years, Illinois has sent over 400 fire personnel to Washington DC to help make the fire service in Illinois and across our nation safer and better equipped to handle anything that may come our way. I want to say thank you to all of you that have taken the time out your busy schedules to support this fire caucus.

If you think or if you know anyone that might be interested in representing the Illinois Fire Service next year at CFSI Please contact me. I have listed the date below:

Congressional Fire Services Institute

Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday April 23, 24 & 25, 2019

Washington DC



Chief Mike Mavrogeorge and Ronald Kubicki

Ronald Kubicki – Legislative Liaison

708-768-1668

ronaldkubicki@comcast.net