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Spring 2026

an official Publication of the Illinois Association of Fire Protection Districts



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### ***In this Issue:***

- *81st Annual Conference Details*
- *What Does The SJR 7 Task Force Report Tell Us?*
- *Governor's Building Up Illinois Poses Risk for Fire Service*

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# THE FIRE CALL

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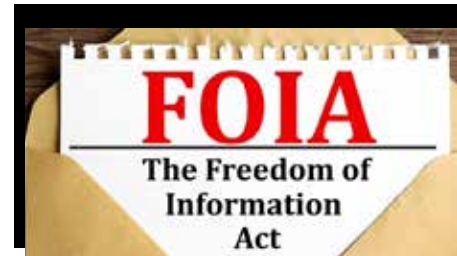
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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



By Damon Schuldt, Martinton FPD

Writing this article brings a mixed “fire brigade bucket” of thoughts and emotions as we remember the passing of our President Brett Kunkel. If there was ever a life devoted to service, dedication and involvement it would be the one of Brett Kunkel. While he spent his working career as a coal miner, he was instrumental in developing and participating in their Fire Brigade including attending many training sessions in Illinois and other portions of the country. He started in the fire service as Junior FF Kunkel in 1970 for what would become the Shoal Creek FPD and moved up the ranks to become Chief. He worked to push for formation of fire districts in his area to enhance service. In 1989 he joined the IAFF and held several positions including VP and most recently as President. In addition to his fire service work, he was previously the Mayor of Sorrento, IL further solidifying a commitment to his community.

The following are excerpts from the eulogy that I had the privilege of delivering at Brett's funeral service:

*“What do you say about a man who has dedicated his life to so many causes... so many organizations... so many people... so many family members... and certainly to the fire services in Illinois.” One would say that “when a person like Brett Kunkel lives his life, you can see it... In his dedication, his commitment, his involvement, his helpfulness each*

*and every day he lived....He traveled through life by his actions....not by words, not by accolades, but by and how he led his life. Brett was one of the most respected persons we have known because of those actions.”*

*We should “honor Brett by following in his example of a life of service and to keep that Brett Kunkel smile on your face as we celebrate his life and honor a legacy that will live on for a very long time. I would challenge the young people, and the young firefighters in the room, to take Brett's life as an example of how to lead your life and your career.”*

It is with honor, respect and humbleness that I am propelled in to the President's position as per the bylaws of our association – a place within a great organization that will continue to be there for our members, our partners and the fire services in Illinois. It is my hope that I follow in the footsteps of Mike and Brett and build upon their legacy of commitment, service and dedication. I feel I can speak for our association that we are committed to serving our membership and our partners (or as I like to refer to them as our “customers”) to the best of our ability.

We want to encourage everyone to join us for the 2026 conference on June 11th - 13th at the Embassy Suites and Conference Center in East Peoria, IL. We are excited to bring you quality educational and networking opportunities at a venue new to

our event. This year will offer a wide range of session topics coupled with a trade show to include a special 911 memorial exhibit. Our conference is for all fire service personnel, not just Trustees, so please bring a friend, a neighboring Trustee, a Chief, Pension Trustees or other department members. Look at our website and/or an email for upcoming registration.

We also have a fall Continuing Trustee Education (CTE) class scheduled for Nov. 14<sup>th</sup> at Cherry Valley FPD. This is another great opportunity to learn and to refresh your knowledge while become more proficient in your tasks.

As always, stay safe and I look forward to visiting with you at the conference! ■

**Damon Schuldt, IAFFD President  
Martinton Fire Protection District**

## IN MEMORY



**Brett Kunkel**

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# ASSOCIATION UPDATE



*By Cheri Breneman  
Association Administrator*

## Next Mission: Conference in June

**A**s we head into the spring season and all the activity it brings for the IAFFPD, some of us do so with heavy hearts and a time of reflection. Our organization has experienced a third significant loss in a very short time (President Mike Dillon, Legislative Liaison Time Deuschle and newly elected President Brett Kunkel), and we are continuing to work through both grief and transition together.

The passing of our recently appointed President, Brett Kunkel, a lifetime member of the Shoal Creek Fire Protection District, has reminded us of the fire service community's compassion and the strength of the IAFFPD family. In the short time since we lost Michael Dillon in November, Brett has fully dedicated himself to leading the IAFFPD forward and carrying out the Board of Directors' vision.

In this issue, we honor Brett's life and the many ways he contributed to this organization; at the same time, we recommit ourselves to the mission he cared so deeply about.

We are turning to the important work ahead of us, including events that Brett cared deeply about through his work on the conference planning committee. In the 21 years I've been with the IAFFPD, he never missed a conference. He played a key role in shaping many of the programs and activities offered over the years, as well as those we're planning for 2026. The keynotes, the memorial to remember our friends, and the tradeshow were especially

meaningful to him, and we're committed to making this year's event one he would be proud of.

As we have announced recently, the conference will include a celebration of America's 250th anniversary, recognizing our nation's history, the flag, the national anthem, and the fire service. We'll also pause to honor a day that remains vivid for all of us, reflecting Brett's strong support for remembering the 343 firefighters, and to welcome two FDNY speakers to share their stories. And the tradeshow, something Brett helped lead for many years, will present our members with a strong apparatus showcase along with new products, interactive activities, and specialty services for fire departments of all kinds. We host an evening party that brings people together for music, drinks, and great conversation. We will raise a glass to those who are not there with us, but present in spirit.

Our speakers are second to none, and what truly makes the IAFFPD Conference the success it has been for 80 years. We are grateful to attorneys James Sinclair, John Brady, Shawn Flaherty, and Carolyn Clifford for their role in our conference program development. We are pleased to welcome their colleagues, Karl Ottoson, John Motylinski, Meghan Trela, and several other professionals who bring high-quality contributions to the educational agenda. We have 4 sessions running during most time slots, so it is suggested you bring your fellow trustees to DIVIDE AND CONQUER,

and take back as much information as possible to your fire protection district.

As you read through what I hope is every page of this issue of *The Fire Call*, you will see the IAFFPD 81st Annual Conference details, and then take the next step: **GET REGISTERED BEFORE MAY 30**. If your district is routinely represented at this conference, and you know a neighboring district that is not. Please reach out to them with some words of encouragement to join you in doing what you find valuable to your role with the fire district. We have a newcomer discount available for this purpose!

As the IAFFPD Conference moves to a new venue, we do so with our members' needs in mind. The Embassy has twice as many hotel rooms, with great amenities, the famous cook-to-order breakfast, a complimentary evening reception, spacious sleeping rooms, and an easy-to-access conference center. East Peoria has several great eateries and shopping within a 2-minute drive. We anticipate a great turnout and hope you have plans to join us in June! ■

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| Bristol Kendall FPD         | Hammond FPD              | O'Fallon-Shiloh-Valey-     |
| Bunker Hill FPD             | Highland-Pierron FPD     | Caseyville                 |
| Carrollton FPD              | Hollywood Heights FPD    | Pocahontas-Old Ripley FPD  |
| Chatham FPD                 | Kell Community FPD       | Raymond FPD                |
| Dorsey FPD                  | Lake Egypt FPD           | Salem FPD                  |
| Dunlap Community FPD        | Lawrence-Allison FPD     | Shoal Creek FPD            |
| East Side FPD               | Liberty Fire Prot. Dist. | Shumway FPD                |
| Emerald Mound FPD           | Marissa FPD              | Signal Hill FPD            |
| Fairview Caseyville Twp FPD | Martinton FPD            | Smithton FPD               |
| Freeburg FPD                | Massac County FPD        | Staunton FD                |
| Glen Carbon FPD             | Mt. Olive FPD            | Troy FPD (Madison)         |
| Godfrey FPD                 | Nokomis Area FPD         | White Hall FPD             |
| Granville Hennepin FPD      | Norris City FPD          | Wood Dale FPD              |



Special thanks for the IAFPD Foundation Raffle Donations - we raised \$1,000 for the Scholarship Program!

# FIRE COUNSEL NOTES



## “Two Part Harmony or (perhaps) Disharmony”

By James S. Sinclair, IAFFPD Counsel  
Stobbs & Sinclair, LTD

**T**his issue's Fire Counsel Notes is divided into two discreet, but perhaps interrelated, topics in the news.

### Part 1: What Does The SJR 7 Task Force Report Tell Us?

This spring, the Report of the “Task Force on Recruiting & Retaining Public Employee Firefighters and Paramedics” which was created by Senate Joint Resolution 7 adopted in May 2023, was issued. The Task Force was comprised of 19 representatives from the legislature and emergency service organizations primarily in the area of fire service. Its charge was to examine the issues of recruitment and retention of firefighters and paramedics in Illinois.

The Report is interesting in that while it is predominantly a fire service directed undertaking, it is clear in reading the Report that issues involving emergency medical services became a predominant aspect of the Task Force's focus on the issue of recruitment and retention. This is interesting because it demonstrates how significantly the fire service has been impacted by the problems communities in much of Illinois are facing in delivering adequate and timely emergency medical services (EMS) to their residents. For example, there is considerable discussion regarding requirements for paramedic status in firefighter hiring and recruitment. While the Report does focus on other topics related to firefighter recruitment such as reducing the age of eligibility to become a career (full time) firefighter from 21 to 18 years of age and adjustment of pension benefits for new full time

firefighters under the Pension Code Tier II rules, it lists as a primary issue in recruiting challenges in paramedic training programs and pass rates for EMS training under the National Registry Paramedic Exam. The examination of this topic and the Report's focus on it reflects that, in the Illinois fire service today, EMS is a major issue.

The Report contains information regarding comparative pass rates in 5 states, including Illinois, on the National Registry Paramedic Exam. It also shows the initial pass rate in Illinois on the national exam from 2013 to 2025. While the Report also discusses issues such as financial assistance for firefighter training (MAP Grants); easing the transition of military personnel to the fire service; reviewing the manner by which full time firefighters are hired under the current provisions in the Fire Protection District Act and the Municipal Code; and encouraging the Office of the State Fire Marshal to revise the mechanism by which a firefighter from another state can become certified in Illinois, it is clear from reading the Report that an overarching issue in the fire service today is its involvement in EMS to a much greater degree than in the past. This is not surprising as more and more not for profit and private ambulance providers reduce or end emergency ambulance service in many parts of Illinois with the result that communities have turned to the fire departments of

Illinois, whether fire protection district or municipal or career or noncareer (part time, volunteer, POC etc.), to provide this essential service. In many cases this may mean adding an emergency medical responder (first responder) program to the fire department's operations which means becoming part of an EMS system under the direction of a medical director, resource hospital, and the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH). In other cases, fire departments have added full EMS ambulance transport to their operations with a requirement that their firefighters have an EMT or paramedic licensure. All of this has occurred against the backdrop of declining EMS and ambulance service from other sources and it has placed a strain on the fire service at all levels and on both the career and noncareer sides of the fire service. This aspect is one which will, at some point, have to be addressed if both adequate fire/rescue services and EMS are to be provided in many areas of the state.

The SJR 7 Report also examined and presented limited statistics giving examples of the decline in the number of firefighters in 3 of the 5 top states in firefighter numbers between 2019 and 2023. And, in what the Report labelled a “random sample” of 3 locations in Illinois, the Report reflects the precipitous decline in applications to become a firefighter as

*Continued on page 12*



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## Fire Counsel Notes

*Continued from page 10*

shown in the selected locations where the decline in applications has ranged from 88% to 100%.

What has changed? At the top of the Report's list of reasons is a lack of accredited paramedic training programs and the challenges presented to individuals in the accreditation and approval of such programs (EMS again!). This was followed by the difficulties experienced by volunteer firefighters and EMTs in finding time to train. The Report next identifies as a cause the reduction in career firefighter pensions under Article 4 of the Pension Code based on the state's Tier 1/Tier 2 system. This was followed by the minimum age requirement for full time firefighters (21) which impedes entry into the fire service directly from high school and fire service programs offered by community colleges. Beyond these "top 3" hurdles, the Report goes on to identify two "Additional Obstacles," both of which are EMS related: confusion regarding regional approval of EMS training programs and low pass rates on the National Registry Paramedic Exam. Again, what comes through? Arguably, that a good part of the recruitment and retention problem may be the result of the fire service in Illinois becoming more deeply involved in EMS and less focused on traditional fire service functions of fire prevention, fire suppression, and rescue services. A question which comes through is whether the fire service in Illinois, in stepping into the vacuum left by the departure of traditional non-fire related EMS providers, has itself exacerbated the problem of recruiting and retaining firefighters.

The Report concludes by making 4 Recommendations to address the problem retention and recruiting problem:

**#1 Streamline Certification Processes and remove barriers for Firefighters.**

**#2 Address Disparities in Retirement Benefits.**

**#3 Streamline Paramedic Licensing and Program Approval Processes.**

**#4 Explore Regionalization for Efficiency.**

There are suggestions offered in the Report to address each of these four points, but it is fair to say that a good part of the recommendations are aimed at EMS issues.

It is also notable that the Report's last recommendation returns to an oft heard recommendation that "regionalization of fire protection agencies to optimize resource sharing" be considered. Translation: consolidation. As these issues continue to fester in the fire service, fire protection districts will need to be prepared to assess and recognize that consolidation will be seen as a needed step in the fire service. District boards need to be thinking about how they will address consolidation if it comes "a-knocking" by legislation from the General Assembly or local pressure caused by lack of personnel and financial resources to operate a functional fire department and the provision of emergency medical services.

Readers desiring to read the full Report, which includes a case study based on a nationwide program in Finland related to fire and rescue services consolidation and the minutes of the Task Force meetings should be able to access it at the following link: <https://sfm.illinois.gov/about/boardscommissions/recruiting---retaining-public-firefighters-and-paramedi.html> in "2026."

### **Part 2: Should Illinois Fire Protection Districts Look For An Alternative Funding Source?**

A recent election in three counties around St. Louis, Missouri involving fire protection districts gives rise to a question for districts in Illinois: Given the opposition to property taxes, is it time to look seriously for an alternative to real estate taxes to fund fire protection districts? Pursuant to legislation passed by the Missouri General Assembly in 2025, fire protection and ambulance districts in St. Louis County, St. Charles County, and Jefferson County in Missouri were authorized to place on the ballot in the April election in those counties a proposition to replace a portion of the real estate tax fire districts in those counties levy to support their operations with a 1% sales tax. Districts obtaining approval from the voters for the sales tax will be required to reduce their property

tax levies in future years by up to one-half, but, if the sales tax revenues do not replace all of the property tax reduction, the districts will be able to raise their property tax levies to recoup the shortfall. Some 38 fire protection districts located in the three counties placed the sales tax question on the ballot in the recent April election. Of those, voters in 18 districts approved the sales tax. The propositions fared best in St. Louis County where the proposition passed in 14 of 20 districts, while in the other two counties, the proposition passed in only 4 of the 18 districts. Press accounts gave differing possible reasons for the disparity in results, but one reason given is that the proposals were strongly supported by the firefighters' labor union in St. Louis County. Proponents argued that the replacement of a substantial part of the real estate tax by a sales tax was a way to generate more revenue from persons who do not live in a district, but who use its emergency services when they are in the district. Sales taxes are generally considered to be a more "regressive" form of tax (meaning that the burden of the tax is greater on lower income persons) than the real estate tax, but they tend to be dependent on the amount of taxable retail activity in the district which can fluctuate with the condition of the economy. As retail sales grow with more economic activity, sales tax revenues rise giving more financial support to the local government to fund its operations. Conversely, when the economy is in recession and retail sales fall or go flat, revenues from sales tax can decline rather precipitously. Real estate taxes, on the other hand, remain generally more stable, but, as demonstrated during and following the 2008 Great Recession, they can go flat or decline as property values fall due to the recession in the economy. Combining financial support from both taxes could be viewed as a better method than reliance solely on one revenue source as is now the case for fire protection districts in Illinois. One press report estimated that the districts where the sales tax proposition passed could be looking to receive as much as \$100 million in additional revenue in 2027, a year before any real estate tax reductions would go into effect.

*Continued on page 14*



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## Fire Counsel Notes

Continued from page 12

While Illinois does have, at the county level, authority for a public safety tax which, like the measure in Missouri, is a sales tax, the Illinois version, because it is collected and distributed by county government, rather than taxing bodies like fire protection districts directly, has generally been skewed to law enforcement in the few counties where it has been approved by voters. (55 ILCS 5/5-1006.5) The Missouri approach, if adopted in Illinois, would be a major departure from local government finance for units of local government like fire protection districts. Even though municipalities have had limited sales tax authority for a long period of time, specialized units

of local government have not. Given the opposition to real estate taxes in Illinois, one wonders whether the Missouri approach warrants a closer look as an alternative to provide financial support for essential government services like fire protection districts. On the other hand, given the opposition in the Illinois General Assembly to any form of higher local tax propositions, whether such a proposition could gain sufficient support from legislators to be seriously considered is questionable. Perhaps, however, if a real estate tax offset were made part of the plan, who knows?

### Conclusion

So how do these two seemingly disparate topics relate to each other? Quite simply, it is clear that, to a significant

degree, many of the issues raised by the SJR 7 Task Force Report are tied to money and the cost of providing what is becoming a major financial burden for fire protection districts in the state: emergency medical services—EMS. It is simply a reality that operating an EMS service on a volunteer basis is not viable. On the other hand, as EMS is pushed further into the fire service operations, the cost of personnel to operate a viable EMS system often exceeds what property taxes and ambulance service call revenues will supply. An alternative funding model may be in order. Something for districts to think about and perhaps put to their state representatives and senators the next time they see them.

Take care and good luck! ■

## IAFPD's Open Meeting Act (OMA) Training LIVE WEBINAR July 16, 2026, 4:00 – 6:00 pm

Presented by: David Livingstone

Chief of the Civil Division, Madison County State's Attorney's Office

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- Meeting the State training requirements for local government officials who need to complete the training (90 days from taking office)
- Presented by experienced legal professional

Public Act 1000-1127 authorizes the IAFPD to provide the required by Section 1.05 of the Open Meetings Act for all trustees of fire protection districts. This program is directed more specifically for fire districts and serves as an alternative to the existing online training through the Illinois Attorney General's website. IAFPD's OMA training gives newly appointed or elected trustees the opportunity to meet their Open Meetings Act training requirement in via live webinar meeting format. You may ask questions! Trustees who have completed the 12-hour ETT program will earn 2 CE hours by participating in this program.

### Program participants can expect:

- An overview of OMA Compliance
- Background and legal requirements for an open meeting and closed meetings
- Applicability of the Act to public bodies
- Procedures and requirements regarding quorums, notice, and recordkeeping
- Violation penalties and other consequences
- Examples of Agendas, Minutes, Motions
- A Quick Guide to the Open Meetings Act (resource)
- 2 CE credits for those who have completed the Essential Trustee Training program

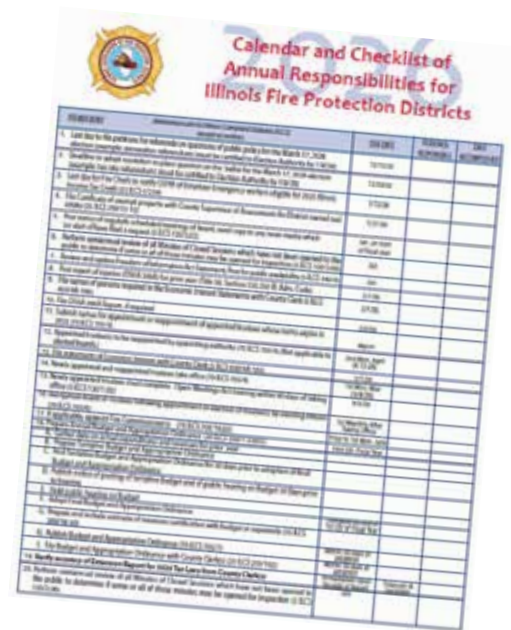
**About Our Presenter:** **David Livingstone** received his bachelor's degree in criminal justice –Legal Studies Emphasis; Political Science; and Public Administration from Lindenwood University in St. Charles, Mo., before earning his Juris Doctor from Saint Louis University School of Law, focusing on civil litigation. During law school, he was a law clerk at Stobbs, Sinclair & Associates and later became a partner of the firm where he practiced for several years before becoming chief of the Civil Division at the Madison County State's Attorney's office. He continues to be a valued supporter and presenter of IAFPD programs throughout the year.



# COMPLIANCE CORNER

## Calendar / Checklist Reminders

- ❖ All District Trustees and those Officers of the Fire Department who are required to file must file their Annual Statement of Economic Interest with their County Clerk on or before May 1.
- ❖ Verify that appointments and reappointments to the Board of Trustees have been made by the district's appointing authority and remember to "reorganize" the Board by electing or re-electing all Board officers (president, secretary, treasurer).
- ❖ Districts with a May 1, June 1, or July 1 fiscal year beginning date should commence preparation of the annual budget and appropriation ordinance for the district.
- ❖ All districts which have not already received their 2025 tax levy extension report from their County Clerk (or Clerks if the district is located in more than one county) to confirm that the extension checks with the levy amounts submitted by the district. If there is a discrepancy, action should be taken to ascertain why that is the case and have a correction made if necessary. ■



**Don't worry about budgets when you have other fires to put out.**

### Municipal and Tax-Exempt Financing can help you:

- Finance almost anything that is essential to the daily operation of your Fire Department
- Overcome budget restrictions
- Make necessary building and equipment purchases now, then pay them back over time

- ✓ **No down payment / 100% financing available**
- ✓ **Quick application and closing**

### We're here to help!

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# LEGISLATIVE UPDATE



By Brittan Bolin  
IAFPD Lobbyist

## Governor's Housing Agenda Poses Risk for Fire Service

In his combined State of the State and Budget address on February 18, 2026, Governor JB Pritzker focused on affordable housing as one of the issues he wants to tackle this spring. While the goals of increasing access to housing are laudable, some of the details in his proposal have raised concerns within the fire service.

In promoting his Building Up Illinois Developments or BUILD Plan, Pritzker cited a study by the Illinois Economic Policy Institute and the Project for Middle Class Renewal at the University of Illinois Champaign Urbana that showed that Illinois is currently short 142,000 housing units and will need an additional 227,000 homes by 2030. While the housing crisis is a national issue, data reflects that Illinois has seen slower growth than other states following the COVID-19 pandemic, something Pritzker aims to fix with the BUILD plan.

The governor proposes to encourage housing development by reducing red tape. This is where the definition of "red tape" becomes problematic because some of his housing agenda conflicts with regulations that ensure fire safety. Senate Bill 4061 sponsored by Senator Sara Feigenholtz (D-6, Chicago) and House Bill 5626 sponsored by Representative Kam Buckner (D-26, Chicago) provide that, beginning January 1, 2027, no building code adopted by a county or municipality may prohibit residential buildings from having a single stairway serving as an exit for all units if the building meets certain other fire safety conditions. These bills would effectively increase the current

code requirement of a single stairway for up to three stories to six stories.

The International Code Council and the National Fire Protection Association require multiple means of egress for buildings above three stories. This requirement is supported by research that shows that reducing means of egress pose risks for both first responders and building occupants. Allowing for increased single-stairway development also fails to recognize that not every fire department will be equipped to respond to an emergency in buildings over three stories.

Another bill proposed by the Governor would allow for accessory dwelling units or ADUs. Often referred to as "granny flats", House Bill 5626 and companion Senate Bill 4017 sponsored by Senator Robert Martwick (D-10, Chicago) would require municipalities to allow for the construction of ADUs including backyard cottages, above-garage apartments and attached secondary units without additional restrictions from those required for single family homes. Under the provisions of these bills, up to eight accessory structures could be built on a 7,501 square foot lot. Accessory dwelling units are currently subject to greater review than single-family homes, particularly in the city of Chicago.

The ADU proposal like single-stairway does not meet International Code Council recommendations for fire separation and access requirements and could result in fire spread risks. Members of the fire service including the AFFI, the Illinois Fire Chiefs Association and the Illinois

Municipal League have been actively lobbying against these two proposals in the governor's BUILD initiative and several members of IFCA and IAFPD spoke with legislators regarding these bills during our March legislative day.

Fortunately, many municipalities have joined the fire service in raising questions about ADUs and single-stairway configurations. After the Governor gave his address in February, mayors of Peoria, Rockford and South Barrington spoke with the Chicago Tribune about their concerns. Even members of the Chicago City Council have spoken against relaxing restrictions on ADUs despite support from the Mayor of Chicago and the Governor.

Whether the administration can overcome the resistance to these bills will play out in the final weeks of the legislative session. IAFPD stands with our fire service partners in supporting ICC/NFPA consensus-based code requirements and the ability of local authorities to uphold these codes within their city limits for the safety of fire fighters and residents. We echo the statement by the IFCA that safety must never be sacrificed in exchange for development convenience and cost reduction. ■

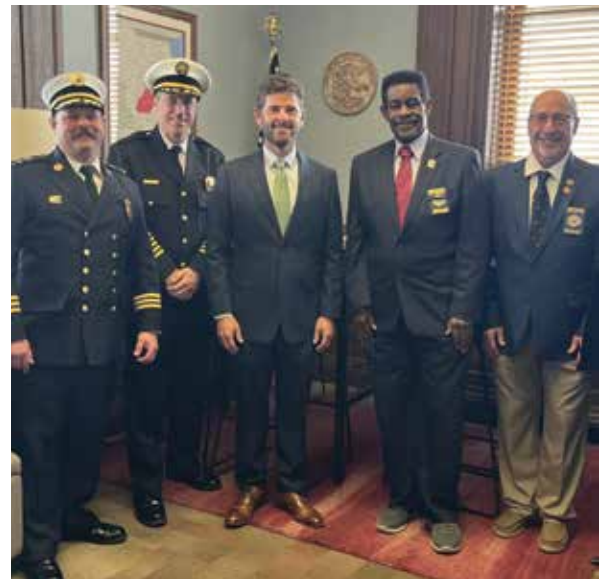
**26th ANNUAL ILLINOIS FIRE SERVICE LEGISLATIVE DAY**  
**Wednesday, March 25, 2026**



*Illinois Fire Service Legislative Day 2026 Springfield IL*



*Legislative Day with IAFPD Leaders*



*Legislative Day attendees with Representative Ryan Spain*



*Chief John Winters with Senator Erica Hariss*



*IAFPD Legislative Chair, Marvin Hill with Senator Darby Hills*



*Legislative Day Breakfast pregame with North Palos Chiefs*



*Legislative Day Breakfast pregame with Chatham Chiefs*

# NEW MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



By: Karrie Beneky  
IAFPD Administrative Assistant

We can't wait to see  
you in June!

**T**he Conference is Almost Here!  
We've all been eagerly waiting for the opportunity to register for the Annual Conference, and the time has finally come!

If your district has trustees who haven't yet completed the Essential Trustee Training (ETT) program, this is the perfect opportunity to access high-quality education tailored to their role. Scholarships are available for ETT, and we strongly encourage you to apply. The process is simple, just visit the IAFPD Conferences page at [iafpd.org](http://iafpd.org) and download the application form. **The deadline to apply is May 15.**

If your district has not attended the IAFPD Annual Conference in the past, we want to talk to you! Call our office to learn how we can make it easier for you to attend.

No matter your educational goals, it all begins with our fast and simple online registration. Registering online ensures accurate tracking of your attendance and helps you earn the certifications you need. A Few Tips for a Smooth Registration:

- If someone else is registering on your behalf, make sure they know whether you need ETT or continuing education (CE) hours.
- You'll need your Members Only login credentials to register. If you have not yet claimed your member profile in our new system, GlueUp, please contact us, we're here to help.
- Choose the correct registration option, full conference attendance or Essential Trustee Training. *Note: You must be registered for ETT to attend.*

- Your individual email address is essential for all conference-related communication. You cannot claim your membership or register without one.
- Guest registration is available! Family and friends are welcome at all social events. We also invite guests to bring crafting projects or help build a fire protection district T-shirt quilt. We'll provide the materials, a comfortable space to gather and connect, and snacks.

**This year's trade show** is packed with demonstrations and special guest presentations from some of our most popular speakers. The event will also include a September 11 remembrance and a celebration

of America as we mark the country's 250th birthday.

If your company provides services or equipment for fire departments, consider exhibiting. Registration is available at [iafpd.org](http://iafpd.org). Exhibit space will fill quickly, and sponsorship opportunities are available to enhance your visibility at the conference. This show is a perfect opportunity to meet with your current customers and perhaps pick up a few new ones. We hope you will join us.

If you need assistance, feel free to email me at [karrie@iafpd.org](mailto:karrie@iafpd.org) or call our office at 217-525-6620.

**We can't wait to see you in June! ■**

## IAFPD Conference Vendor & Sponsorship Information One Day Trade Show: Friday, June 12th

The IAFPD Annual Conference offers opportunities to promote companies that sell fire apparatus, equipment, supplies, and emergency services to fire districts in Illinois. This year's conference will be at a new venue in East Peoria, with added programs and social events!

- A One-Day Tradeshow - Friday 11am-5pm is our vendors and sponsors
- Outdoor Vehicle Display - located a few steps from the conference Center
- Sign Up Before May 15th to Save!

**Reserve Your Space Today!**  
**Sign-up before May 15th to Save \$100**

**217-525-6620 - [www.iafpd.org](http://www.iafpd.org)**





**IAFPD FOUNDATION  
FUNDRAISER GOLF OUTING  
EDUCATING THE NEXT GENERATION**



**August 21, 2026**

**Oak Springs Golf Course: 6740 E 3500 S Rd. St. Anne, IL 60954**

**Registration 10:30**

**Shotgun start 12:00 pm**

**Rain or Shine**

NAME(S) OF GOLFERS _____	<b>18 Hole Best Ball Scramble</b>
Golfer #1 (Captain) _____	Phone Number _____
Golfer #2 _____	
Golfer #3 _____	<b>DON'T WAIT!!</b>
Golfer #4 _____	<b>Reservations Limited to</b>
Golfer Fee \$500 per team	<b>36 teams</b>

- Gold Sponsor: \$2000 Dinner Sponsor includes - 4 Free Golfers
- Silver Sponsor: \$1000 Dinner Sponsor - includes 2 Free Golfers
- Bronze Sponsor: \$500 Lunch & Beverage Sponsor
- Hole Sponsor: \$100 each **Company Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Please fill in all fields. Information will be used to confirm your registration.**

**Company Representative or Team Captain Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_ (Team Captain or Company)

**City:** \_\_\_\_\_ **State:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Zip:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Total Payment \$** \_\_\_\_\_ **Check Enclosed** \_\_\_\_\_

**Please make checks payable to:**  
IAFPD Foundation  
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Springfield, IL 62703  
Tax ID: EIN 35-2189598

Online registration is available at [IAFPD.ORG/IAFPD-FOUNDATION](http://IAFPD.ORG/IAFPD-FOUNDATION)  
OR scan the QR code below. Credit card payment is available online.



**Lunch and Dinner Provided  
Raffles, Door Prizes, Games and FUN!!**

**Questions? Please contact:**

**Steve Schultz 815-370-4520    Larry Brown 815-252-2702    Don Loos 217-430-9136**

**All Proceeds benefit the Foundation Educational Fund**

# AROUND THE STATE



## A Word from our Fire Service Partners

**From the Editor:** The following column is intended to provide our readers an update on fire service activities from around the state.

### Illinois Fire Chiefs Association



Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the Fire Call. The Illinois Fire Chiefs Association values our long-standing partnership with the IAFFPD. At the end of this month, Maureen Griseto will be retiring as the Executive Assistant for the IFCA. Maureen started with the IFCA in 1990 but has been a part of our organization for much longer than those 36 years. She has been the voice on the phone, the recipient of your emails, and the friendly face checking you in at our many events. She is a living encyclopedia of all things IFCA. She has been a great resource for me as the IFCA President, and I am sure every President before me. I join all the IFCA membership in wishing her a very happy retirement.

With Maureen's retirement, the IFCA took time to evaluate how to manage our organization. In February, the Board chose to sign a 3-year contract with Wisconsin Association Management (WAM) to transition into their organization to oversee all of the duties of the Executive Assistant and the Executive Director. WAM will utilize an effective team-approach for managing our Association and Foundation. The WAM team will provide administrative and executive management, public relations, event planning, membership recruitment and retention, publications and communications, and our website management. A complete transition is expected to be completed by the end of June 2026.

This year, the IFCA is celebrating our 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Please join us on August

15, 2026, for an unforgettable evening at the Westin Chicago Lombard. The fun filled evening will feature great company, celebration, and memories in the making. RSVP and ticket purchasing information is available on the IFCA website. Secure your tickets, book your stay with our special group rate, and make it a great night. We look forward to celebrating with you and your spouses or significant others.

I hope to see many of you at the 2026 Illinois Fire Chiefs Educational and Research Foundation Golf Outing on July 15<sup>th</sup>. This is the primary fund raiser for the Foundation and a great time. The **Illinois Fire Chiefs Educational and Research Foundation** provides scholarships and grants to students and educational institutions for undergraduate, post-graduate and vocational education. In 2025, the Foundation was able to provide scholarships valued at \$66,000 to 77 Fire Service Personnel throughout the State of Illinois. Register on the IFCA website at [www.illinoisfirechiefs.org](http://www.illinoisfirechiefs.org).

As a note, we have recently updated our social media presence and encourage you to follow us on Facebook at Illinois Fire Chiefs Association – IFCA.

Brian Lambel  
IFCA President.

**John Buckley**  
**Executive Director, IFCA**  
[execdir@illinoisfirechiefs.org](mailto:execdir@illinoisfirechiefs.org)

### Illinois Fire Service Institute

Spring is here and with it comes a new round of training opportunities with IFSI. Upcoming classes



include Hazardous Materials Awareness and Operations, Common Passenger Vehicle Rescue, and Fire Apparatus Engineer. Smoke Divers, Emergency Medical Technician, and Fireground Command and Fireground Company Officer courses will also offer additional opportunities for hands-on training.

Check the IFSI website for a full list of training opportunities occurring in Champaign and around the state.

See below for information about other programs coming this spring and summer.

#### **2026 Fire College-Time to Train**

Registration is open for the 102nd Annual Fire College scheduled for June 5-7 in Champaign. IFSI is offering 22 unique courses from which students of all skill levels can choose to customize their training experience. Hands-on, live fire, and classroom training will be led by IFSI elite instructors.

A limited number of hotel rooms are available at no cost to Fire College registrants. Funding for accommodations is provided by the Office of the Illinois State Fire Marshal.

New this year is the Fire College Expo. Vendors will be onsite displaying and selling items ideal for first responders. Leather goods, tools, gear bags, helmet shields, children's gear, novelty items, and IFSI apparel will be available for purchase.

Classes fill quickly. Register now.

#### **IFSI-FOCUSING ON THE NEXT GENERATION OF FIREFIGHTERS**

Do you know someone interested in becoming a firefighter? How about individuals ages 15-20 who are already

*Continued on page 21*

## Around the State

Continued from page 20

affiliated with a department and looking for specialized training opportunities? IFSI has you covered. The following programs are designed to inspire and help prepare the next generation of first responders for life in the fire service.



### Discover IFSI

IFSI is holding a free information session for individuals interested in pursuing a career in the fire service. The program includes a brief presentation detailing how to become a firefighter and a tour of the IFSI grounds. Participants will have an opportunity to observe live fire and rescue training during the 102<sup>nd</sup> Annual Fire College.

Guests are invited to stay for lunch. Participants will have the opportunity to speak directly with trained fire service

personnel who will discuss life as a firefighter and answer questions about being a first responder.

Help inspire the next generation of firefighters. Please share this information with individuals who might be interested in the fire service.

### Explorer Cadet Fire School

Registration is open for the 2026 Explorer Cadet Fire School being held July 16-19 in Champaign. This unique training event is for Explorers, Cadets, and Junior Firefighters between the ages of 15-20. Students will engage in hands-on, live fire training led by top fire service professionals.

Courses are designed to accommodate Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced skill levels. **Class topics include:**

- Equipment and tactics for ropes and knots
- Gear and safety
- Auto extrication
- Structural firefighting
- High-rise firefighting
- Transitional attack
- Standpipe operations
- Thermal imaging cameras

A liquified petroleum (LP) gas burn and waterball tournament will be offered at no additional cost to further enhance the student training experience.

Housing is available in university residence halls as part of the registration fee or separately in local hotels.



Explorer Cadet Fire School participants must be affiliated with a fire department to attend this event.

For more information about these events and all IFSI programs, please visit [fsi.illinois.edu](http://fsi.illinois.edu).

**Jim Keiken**  
Director

### IL Fire Inspectors Association



To those that attended our annual conference in March a big thank you. We had over 130 people in attendance, as well as having 28 exhibitors interacting with the group.

Several well-deserved awards were presented at the conference: Past President – Jason Staidl, Elk Grove Village FD; Achievement – Downers Grove Fire Prevention Bureau; Arthur-Morris – Dan Riordan, IFIA; Lonnie Jackson – Marisa Tomich, New Lenox FPD; President’s Award – Nicole McGowan, Bolingbrook FD; Commendation – Joseph Buschbacher, Huntley FPD; New Horizons – Sara Stockstrom, O’Fallon FD. Congratulate them all on jobs well done.

If anyone has ideas or speakers for consideration for next year’s conference, our 50<sup>th</sup> year of providing conferences, please forward them to the office. Save the dates for next year, March 10 – 12, 2027.

With the passing of Rich Ray at the end of last year, of Cybor Fire Protection Co., the IFIA has renamed our scholarship program to the Richard M. Ray Scholarship Fund. As he was a big advocate in training fire inspectors, this will keep his name alive

**22 COURSES** > **TIME TO TRAIN**

**2026 FIRE COLLEGE**  
JUNE 5-7 | CHAMPAIGN

**16 HOURS**

- ENTRY LEVEL RECRUIT FIREFIGHTING
- FIRST-IN CHIEF
- FIRST-IN OFFICER
- LARGE ANIMAL RESCUE
- LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND DECISION MAKING: SUMMER LEADERS
- TACTICAL EMERGENCY CASUALTY CARE (TECC) SECOND EDITION
- WILDLAND FIRE: INITIAL ATTACK CONSIDERATIONS AND TACTICAL WATER USE

**4 HOURS**

- 100 CLUB
- BASIC RIT OPERATIONS
- DOWN AND DIRTY HYDRAULICS
- FIRE SERVICE LADDERS
- FIRE STREAMS AND BEYOND
- FORCIBLE ENTRY
- SEARCHING FOR FIRE vs. SEARCHING FOR VICTIMS
- SELF-CONTAINED BREATHING APPARATUS (SCBA)
- VEIS ROOM AND BEYOND (VENT, ENTRY, ISOLATE, SEARCH)

**8 HOURS**

- BASIC AUTO EXTRICATION
- COMBATTING SINGLE FAMILY DWELLING FIRE
- COMMERCIAL BUILDING OPERATIONS
- CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR CURRENT FIRE INVESTIGATORS
- COORDINATED FIRE ATTACK
- FIREFIGHTING WITH LIMITED PERSONNEL

Continued on page 22

## Around the State

Continued from page 21

with everyone who takes advantage of our scholarships to our OSFM classes.

Throughout the year we offer several OSFM Fire Inspector certifications and Public Fire and Life Safety classes. These classes are posted on our website and in our weekly emails. Registration can be done from there. **We offer Richard M. Ray scholarships** to cover the registration fees for our OSFM certification class, that application is also available on our website.

Note the many other educational classes at the end of this message, especially the class on August 6<sup>th</sup>, where the IFIA, NFPA, IL CRR, and the Illinois Falls Prevention Coalition have teamed together for a FREE class in Plainfield on Steps to Safety: How to Prevent Fires and Falls at Home. More information can be found on this, and all of our seminars and classes, at our website or on the weekly blast updates.

The IFIA was in Palatine on April 8<sup>th</sup>, along with the OSFM and many fire departments to watch the ribbon cutting for the Harper College Emergency Service Training Center. This project has been talked about for decades and became a reality, officially on April 8<sup>th</sup>. The first fire academy class already has 13 registered, and will occur in June.



### Upcoming events:

- May 15 – Fire Door Inspections, and Fire Stopping Mass Timber, Elk Grove Village
- June 26 – Life Safety Plan Review, Palatine
- July 27-31 – PFLSE, Romeoville
- August 3, 10, 17, 24, 31 – Inspector 1, Oak Lawn
- August 6 – Steps to Safety, Plainfield FREE
- September 3, 10, 17, 24 October 1– Inspector 2, Romeoville

- September 25 – Core Chapters of NFPA 101, Location TBD
- November 20 – VIRTUAL, Did You Know? FREE  
**Robert Morris**  
**Executive Director, IFIA**

### Illinois OSHA

*“We’ve been waiting for you.”*

When an IL OSHA inspector starts observing multiple potential violations during a fire department inspection, they often ask, “Why haven’t these conditions been addressed?” While the responses from chiefs and trustees vary, we occasionally hear, “We’ve been waiting for you.” This is not the answer IL OSHA is looking for, and that answer could open a fire department to unintended consequences.

While IL OSHA’s current policy is to issue first-time violations without monetary penalties, receiving a first-time violation dramatically increases the chance of receiving a repeat of that violation in the future. Repeat violations can carry a \$10,000 penalty. When a fire department starts racking up several violations they will often be flagged by IL OSHA for a future follow-up inspection that could take place within the next few months or even a couple of years down the road. During a follow-up the inspector will have the citation packet that was issued during the original inspection and will be checking to make sure none of the previous violations have re-occurred.

The takeaway? Be proactive! Don’t wait for an IL OSHA inspection to enhance health and safety at your fire department. With the wealth of resources at [www.osha.illinois.gov/fire](http://www.osha.illinois.gov/fire) fire department leaders can quickly review information and fill gaps that may exist in their organization.

Questions? E-mail us at [DOL.Safety@illinois.gov](mailto:DOL.Safety@illinois.gov) call us at 217-782-9386 or visit us at [osha.illinois.gov](http://osha.illinois.gov) - Fire Department Resources Page: [osha.illinois.gov/fire](http://osha.illinois.gov/fire)

**Erik Kambarian, Chief**  
**Div. of Occupational Safety and Health (IL OSHA) - IL Dept of Labor**



## Firefighters Pension Investment Fund Update



**Preliminary Fiscal Year to Date Investment Performance (July 1 – March 31, 2026)**

FPIF has delivered strong fiscal yeartodate results, with the portfolio returning 7.2%, modestly outperforming its policy benchmark.

Public equities were the primary driver of performance, as the Equity Composite returned 8.7%. Fixed income investments generated a 3.7% return, while alternative investments produced a solid 8.2% return as the Fund continues progressing toward its longterm asset allocation targets.

As of March 31, 2026, FPIF’s total assets stood at approximately \$10.9 billion, reflecting \$731 million in net investment gains for the fiscal year-to-date.

**2026 FPIF Trustee Elections – Key Information** - FPIF will hold 2026 Trustee Elections to fill the following positions:

- Two Executive Trustees
- Two Participant Trustees
- One Beneficiary Trustee

### Election Timeline

- June 10: Candidate applications open
- August 10: Nomination petitions due
- October 23: Ballots mailed to eligible voters
- December 1: Ballots due

### Who Can Run

- **Executive Trustees:** Employer executives (mayors, presidents, senior officers); with petitions signed by 20 participating employers.
- **Participant Trustees:** Activeduty firefighters; with petitions signed by 200 active firefighters.
- **Beneficiary Trustee:** Retired, deferred, or disabled pensioners; with petitions signed by 100 eligible beneficiaries.

Interested in running or voting? Watch for additional election materials and instructions coming soon.

### Upcoming Meetings

- May 21 (9:00 AM) - FPIF Audit & Compliance Committee
- May 27 (9:00 AM) - FPIF Investments & Operations Committee
- June 12 (9:00 AM) - FPIF Board of Trustees

## Around the State

Continued from page 22

**Camp I am Me**  
**New Grant Opportunity for Fire Service, Promotes Fire & Burn Prevention Efforts at Local Level**



Since 1989, Camp I Am Me has been dedicated to empowering burn survivors while preventing burn-related injuries and fire tragedies before they occur. The Prevention Matters Grant program directly reflects Camp I Am Me's commitment to prevention by investing in local, department-led initiatives that address community-specific fire and burn risks throughout Illinois.

This opportunity is designed to support Illinois fire departments (career, combination, and volunteer) in implementing or expanding effective fire safety and burn prevention programs that reduce the incidence and severity of fires and burn-related injuries within their communities.

Funds may be used for fire safety and burn prevention initiatives.

To learn more about this opportunity, grant period timetable, and application, visit [www.IFSA.org/grants](http://www.IFSA.org/grants).

## Nominations Being Accepted for Fire Safety & Prevention Awards

Each year Camp I Am Me presents awards for corporate responsibility, life safety, special recognition, as well as the coveted Wayne Luecht Memorial Award at the annual Fire Prevention Week Luncheon in October. If you know of an individual or group at your department or within your community deserving of this recognition at one of the largest fire service gatherings in the state, please consider submitting a nomination. Nominations may be received at any time but must be submitted no later than August 15<sup>th</sup> to be considered for this year. The nomination form can be found at [www.IFSA.org/fpwl](http://www.IFSA.org/fpwl). This year's luncheon will take place on Thursday, October 8<sup>th</sup> in Woodridge. Mark your calendars!

## Illinois Camp For Young Burn Survivors Scheduled For June

Camp I Am Me's Summer Camp is right around the corner! The 35th annual "Burn Camp" will take place June 14-20 and allows for any young burn survivor between the ages of 7 and 20 to attend this life-altering program at no-cost. Also camp-related, the Fire Department Parade Appreciation Day events are scheduled for Wednesday, June 17th and departments from across the entire state are encouraged to attend, participate, learn about this weeklong healing program, and have a blast with the campers! Visit [www.IFSA.org](http://www.IFSA.org) for details and various volunteering opportunities!

# STIFEL | Public Finance

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Tom Reedy



Nate Fretz

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# Fire Chiefs Workshop

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# FIRE CHIEFS WORD SEARCH

## Workshop Challenge!



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 X U X N D P F V W U L S M Q R C R Z B W B E F M  
 T S S L D T E U H V J K A I K A H K P P E Q Q K  
 P P J Y I Y L H F C X L T F G A W Y J E E X O V  
 R T F I L G L V V N R D X V K H J M U D C D R J  
 O J Z E F Z O Z X Q G N R M F A H I O Q U O O R  
 T R L E F V S A C E A U E E Z I E A N S Z T L A  
 E U H F B A S V H Y X S I J D D Q R C K N M S I  
 C I N F Z A J C B A B H J O H Q T H B K U A P L  
 T C V O E H O G I F C E W Y A D F L A H E N R S  
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# HONEST & OPEN GOVERNMENT



## FOIA & OMA Updates

By David Livingstone  
Assistant Madison County State's Attorney serving as Chief of the Civil Division

Since our last update on the Illinois Open Meetings Act (OMA) (5 ILCS 120/) and the Illinois Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) (5 ILCS 140/), there have been at least one binding opinions from the Public Access Counselor (PAC) concerning FOIA and one concerning OMA. Should you endeavor to read any of the binding PAC opinions, the new Public Access Counselor website address is <https://illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/Open-And-Honest-Government/PAC/Opinions/>.

### **FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT EMPLOYEE TERMINATION LETTERS NOT CREATED FOR A LAW ENFORCEMENT PURPOSE BY A LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY ARE SUBJECT TO DISCLOSURE**

In PAC Opinion **26-002**, a requester requested, basically, documents related to disciplinary action against an assistant state's attorney. The State's Attorney's Office denied the request entirely pursuant to subsections in Section 7(1)(d), citing disclosure would interfere with a pending criminal prosecution and the selection of a jury, because the responsive termination letter included details leading to the employee's termination. The PAC said that because Section 7(1)(d) requires that records be created "for law enforcement purposes," and since the termination letter was created and maintained for personnel purposes (not law enforcement purposes), the record was not exempt under Section 7(1)(d), but was producible as a personnel record. Moreover, the State's Attorney's Office did not demonstrate, to

**About the Author:** David Livingstone received his undergraduate degree in Criminal Justice, Political Science, and Public Administration from Lindenwood University. He is a 2016 graduate of St. Louis University School of Law, concentrating in Civil Litigation. Formerly a principal in the law firm Stobbs, Sinclair & Livingstone, Ltd., in Alton, Illinois, where he represented a number of individuals, entities, and various local units of government, including fire protection districts. He is now Chief of the Civil Division of the Madison County State's Attorney's Office.

the PAC's satisfaction, that the disclosure would create a substantial likelihood that a person would be deprived of a fair trial.

### **REQUESTERS CANNOT REQUIRE FUTURE RECORDS BE COMPILED AND PRODUCED**

In *Tobias v. City of Chicago Office of the Mayor*, 2026 IL App (1st) 241435-U, a requestor requested text messages between the mayor and another person between a certain date and "the date this request is processed." The Mayor's Office initially extended the time to respond, but did not respond within the extended period of time. The requester sued. After the suit was filed, the Mayor's Office produced several pages of text messages, and asserted that the requester's suit was, at that point, moot. The Court dismissed the suit, finding in favor of the City, because the records were not in the City's possession at the time the records were due. The appellate court affirmed, in part, the circuit court and concluded that the City conducted a reasonable search for the records, and that there was no requirement that a public body must provide records coming into its possession after conducting a search. The appellate court took considerable time interpreting the term "processed" and questioning when exactly the request's timeframe concluded. In short, the court held that a

requester cannot request records that do not yet exist, and, in this case, the proper date timeframe of the search was from the initial date identified by the requester through the date the City acknowledged receipt of the request. However, although the City did prevail on the merits, the appellate court remanded the matter back to the circuit court to determine whether civil penalties should be assessed against the City for not responding within the 5-day extension time. Takeaway: if your district receives a request for records between a date and "the date the search for records is conducted," at least one court has determined it is safe to consider the timeframe to end the date the request is acknowledged received.

### **REQUESTS ARE RECEIVED THE DATE THEY ARRIVE IN AN EMAIL SPAM FOLDER OR ARE QUARANTINED**

In *Balzer v. Northeast Illinois Regional Commuter Railroad Corporation*, 2026 IL App (1st) 232227 a request was emailed to a public body. The public body's third party spam filter quarantined the email, but the third-party software did not notify the public body until the following business day that the email was received and quarantined. On that same date, the public

*Continued on page 27*

## Honest & Open Government

Continued from page 26

body replied to the requester, asking the requester to narrow the request because it posed an undue burden. The requester did not narrow the request, and on the sixth business day after the email was quarantined (which was the fifth business day after the public body removed it from quarantine and acknowledged it), the public body denied the request. The requester sued. The circuit court found in favor of the public body, holding the denial was timely. The appellate court reversed the circuit court, and concluded that, for FOIA purposes, the request was received the date it was received and quarantined by the third-party software, not the date the third-party software notified the public body it was received. Also, because the response was untimely, the public body was unable to use the undue burden exemption. Takeaway: always check spam/quarantine/junk mail folders in email, because the date a FOIA request comes into your email inbox (or intercepted by third party software) is the date it is received.

### **PUBLIC BODIES MAY DESIGNATE THE TIME, PLACE, AND PERSON TO WHOM REQUESTS MUST BE DELIVERED**

*Lenard v. Illinois Sec. of State*, 2026 IL App (5th) 241062-U, a requester mailed several FOIA requests to the public body's address he alleged was maintained by the Public Access Counselor. However, the public body adopted regulations and rules requiring FOIA requests be sent to a specific address, which was different than the one known by the requester. The public body argued, and the circuit court agreed, that because the requests were not sent to the proper address, the public body's duty to respond was not triggered. The appellate court affirmed the trial court, and concluded that because Section 3(h) of FOIA authorizes public bodies to promulgate rules governing the time, place, and person from whom records may be requested, and because the public body exercised that authority by adopting rules requiring requests be sent to a certain person, the requester's requests were sent to the wrong address and, therefore, were not actually received

by the public body. Takeaway: public bodies can designate a specific recipient for FOIA request, but be reasonable, and do not require requests be delivered to a mailbox on top of a building when the moon is full.

## **OPEN MEETINGS ACT**

### **ENSURE PUBLIC HAS AN OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT AND ANY LIMITATIONS ON COMMENT FOLLOW ADOPTED RULES.**

In PAC Opinion **26-001**, a citizen spoke at a village board meeting and was identifying village trustees specifically by name, but did not make any inherently inflammatory statements. The first time the citizen named a trustee, the mayor gave warning that citizens may not specifically name trustees. The second time the citizen named a trustee, the mayor unplugged the audio system, so no sound would come through the microphone. The citizen continued to speak, so the mayor approached the lectern and removed the

microphone. The citizen continued to speak, and the mayor and police stood next to the citizen for the remainder of her speaking time. In short, the PAC said (a) although Robert's Rules of Order authorize the mayor to maintain decorum of a meeting, the citizen's comments did not appear to disrupt the decorum of the meeting, and (b) the village did not have an adopted public comment rule prohibiting the name of trustees. The PAC also noted that even if the village did have such a rule, Section 2.06(g) of the Act guarantees "an opportunity to address public officials," which, it concluded "necessarily implies the right to state the names of public officials," and that "rules for public comment at meetings must tend to accommodate, rather than unreasonably restrict, the right to address public officials." So, even if a rule prohibiting the naming of trustees was in place, the rule may not be enforceable as its constitutionality would be questionable. ■

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# DISTRICT PROFILE



## Cherry Fire Protection District



### Location:

118 S Main Street  
Cherry, IL 61317

### Trustees:

Dave Keutzer – President  
Jim Hoscheid – Secretary  
Jeremy Ring – Treasurer

### Chief:

Bob Hoscheid

### District Background:

The Cherry Fire Department has existed since the early 1900's when the St Paul Coal Co. operated a coal mine in Cherry. On November 13, 1909, there was a fire in the mine killing 259 men and boys. Departments as far away as Chicago came to assist. It is the third largest mining disaster in American history.

On October 18, 1912, the volunteer fire department was formed in the village. Then on May 5, 1942, the Cherry Fire Protection District was voted into existence.

### Accomplishments:

We work with a limited budget of around \$32,000.00 per year. In 1983, we purchased a new mini pumper, in 1997 a new engine and in 2014 we moved into our new station. The shell was erected by a contractor and the rest of the work was done by the volunteers. We estimate this saved the taxpayers \$500,000.00.

We have been the recipients of grants for SCBA's (twice), bunker gear, extrication tools, an air fill compressor and station and portable radios.

### Personnel:

18 volunteers

### Dispatch:

BueComm 9-1-1 Dispatch Center (Bureau County ETSB)

### Facility & Apparatus:

- One station.
- 1997 Pierce 1250gpm Engine
- 1991 E-One 1500gpm Engine
- 2010 Ford F350 Brush Truck (Built from a chassis by the volunteers)
- 2000 International 3500gal Tanker
- 1984 Chevy 2000gal Tanker

### District Facts:

5 Square miles  
Day Population Approx: 500  
Property Value: \$8,087,037.00  
Fiscal Cost of Service: \$34100.00  
Annual Calls: 56

### Emergency Services:

Fire  
Automatic Aid: Arlington, Ladd, LaMoille & Spring Valley Fire Departments  
MABAS: Division 57  
Hazmat: Operations Level  
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# PENSION POINTERS



## The Pension Board Decides Disability: Illinois Supreme Court Reaffirms Pension Boards' Authority Over Independent Physicians

By John Motylinski  
Ottosen DiNolfo Hasenbalg & Castaldo, Ltd.

**A** November 2025 decision by the Illinois Supreme Court has reaffirmed a principle that downstate firefighters' pension funds already know well: the pension board, not its independent medical examiners, has the final word on whether an officer or firefighter is disabled.

In *Moreland v. Retirement Board of the Policemen's Annuity and Benefit Fund of the City of Chicago*, 2025 IL 131343, a Chicago police officer was injured in an on-duty traffic accident. After years of treatment, surgery, and medical leave, the officer applied for duty disability benefits. The pension board appointed an orthopedic surgeon to conduct an independent medical evaluation. The surgeon concluded that the officer had reached maximum medical improvement and could return to full, unrestricted duty. However, the officer's treating physician opined that the officer was permanently disabled and could not safely carry or discharge a weapon. The pension board voted to deny the officer's application, crediting the surgeon's opinion.

Separately, the Chicago Police Department declined to reinstate the officer because he was not fit for duty. This left him denied by both the department and the Board. The appellate court reversed, holding that *Moreland* was trapped in a "catch-22" and that the pension board was therefore required to award him benefits. The Illinois Supreme Court disagreed. The Supreme Court first reaffirmed a principle well known to downstate firefighters' pension funds: the pension board, not independent medical examiners, decides whether there is a disability. Like Article

**About the Author:** John E. Motylinski is a partner with the law firm of Ottosen DiNolfo Hasenbalg & Castaldo, Ltd. in Lisle. John graduated summa cum laude from the University of Illinois College of Law and holds an undergraduate degree in political science from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He focuses on the areas of local government, municipal, public pension, and labor and employment law.

4 of the Illinois Pension Code, proof of a Chicago police officer's disability must be "furnished to the board by at least one licensed and practicing physician appointed by the board." The pension board argued that because its appointed surgeon found the officer was not disabled, his disability claim necessarily failed—even though his treating opined otherwise.

The Supreme Court disagreed. Relying on *Wade v. City of North Chicago Police Pension Board*, 226 Ill. 2d 485 (2007), the Court held that the Pension Code only requires that the board receive an opinion on the applicant's disability status from at least one board-appointed physician before awarding a pension. The statute does not require that opinion to be favorable. The pension board remains the ultimate arbiter of disability and retains discretion to credit non-appointed physicians over its own appointed doctor.

The Supreme Court then turned to the officer's "catch-22" argument: the pension board was required to award a disability pension because the Chicago Police Department refused to reinstate him. The Supreme Court rejected that argument, too. While it seems strange that an officer could simultaneously be not "disabled" within the meaning of the Pension Code and also not fit for duty, the Supreme Court explained that the standard for dismissing an unfit officer is *lower* than the one governing the award of a disability pension. Indeed, the legislature vested decisions about fitness for duty and disability pension eligibility to

separate agencies with different missions. Holding otherwise and embracing the "catch-22" analysis advanced by the appellate court would mean that any officer denied reinstatement by his employer is automatically entitled to a disability pension, regardless of the medical evidence. The Supreme Court found nothing in the statute supporting that result.

Ultimately, *Moreland* does not break any new ground for Article 4 pension funds. Appellate court decisions have already established that the pension board is the finder of fact on disability—a board-appointed physician's opinion is important evidence, but it does not automatically control the outcome. In fact, the board may credit a treating physician's testimony if it finds it more persuasive, provided it adequately explains its reasoning in a written decision. Furthermore, the "catch-22" of not being "disabled" under the Pension Code while also being unfit for duty is statutorily permitted. Therefore, an employer's decision not to reinstate an officer does not, standing alone, entitle that officer to a disability pension.

Funds facing these issues are encouraged to obtain legal advice before, during, and after the disability hearing process, not only to ensure procedural compliance, but to build a written record that will withstand administrative review. Accordingly, if you have any questions about *Moreland* or disability pension applications, we recommend you partner with your attorneys. ■



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## Understanding Workers' Compensation from A Fire District Board Perspective

By Paul Boecker, Illinois Public Risk Fund

Understanding the needs and requirements of reporting work related injuries that fall within the workers' compensation act for the State of Illinois can be a daunting task for Fire Districts. The requirements for such reporting are based on statutory wording, but the practical side of the reporting needs to be based on your established policy and procedures.

Workers' Compensation reporting starts with timely filing of the first report of injury (FOI) with all necessary information. The Fire District should have a policy and procedure that covers the following:

- Top Priority, make sure the injured worker receives the medical care needed for the injury, this must be the primary priority.
- Second, collect, organize, and send all incident information to the workers' compensation carrier or reporting party, within the first 24 hours. These items include all personal data for the injured worker, detail surrounding the loss facts, any witness information, photos or videos of the actual accident and any information regarding medical care provided.
- Third, is to coordinate communication between the workers' compensation adjuster, injured worker and the claim contract at the Fire District.

The timing and quick turnaround of information will ensure good reporting of the claim to the workers' compensation carrier. This will allow prompt set up of the claim, allowing the carrier to provide the Fire District with a claim number and the

**About the Author:** Paul Boecker has been with the Illinois Public Risk Fund since 1996 and is currently the Member Services Representative working both with Claims and Loss Control Departments working on IPRF Members needs and Services. Paul can be reached at 630-649-6053 or [pboecker@iprf.com](mailto:pboecker@iprf.com)

workers' compensation adjuster contact information.

While immediate and detailed reporting of a claim is a priority, please keep in mind that this is only the first step in the life of a workers' compensation claim.

Communication is key to the success of any claim handling. All parties should work together and share information to ensure everyone is on the same page.

Communications is a 2-way street, and we all must use it timely to provide the best outcomes for the injured worker and the overall process for each individual claim. Part 2 will provide more detail regarding the content of information that will assist in developing the claim beyond the first report of injury. ■

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# Financial Tools Available to Illinois Fire Protection Districts

By Erin Slone, Deputy Director for Outreach, Illinois State Treasurer's Office

Running a fire protection district requires balancing limited financial resources with ongoing operational demands — equipment replacement, staffing, and consistent service delivery. In that context, having access to reliable financial and administrative tools can make a meaningful difference in both day-to-day operations and longer-term planning.

The Illinois State Treasurer's Office administers several programs available to local governments across the state. Two that may be relevant to fire protection districts are Illinois Funds and ePAY. Both are free to participate in, and both were designed with local government needs in mind.

## Illinois Funds: A Local Government Investment Pool

Fire protection districts routinely hold funds at various points in the budget cycle, including reserves, grant proceeds, and revenues awaiting allocation. Managing those balances while maintaining access to cash is an ongoing consideration for most districts.

Illinois Funds is a local government investment pool administered by the Treasurer's Office. It allows eligible entities to invest funds alongside other public participants, with an emphasis on liquidity, diversification, and preservation of capital. Participants can deposit and withdraw funds as operational needs change, making the program applicable to operating balances as well as reserves.

*Today, 81 fire protection districts across Illinois participate in Illinois Funds, with a combined balance of \$89 million managed by the Treasurer's Office.*

There are no enrollment fees for eligible participants, and the portfolio

**About the Author:** *Erin Slone* currently serves as Deputy Director of Illinois Funds for Outreach for Illinois Treasurer Michael W. Frerichs, where she markets \$20 billion treasury management programs on behalf of over 1500 local governments. Erin spent 14 years as a public finance investment banker structuring debt products and advisory services for state and local governments and agencies across the country. She also spent eight years as a business and marketing consultant for fintech startups. Erin received a Bachelor's degree in Economics with Honors from the University of Chicago, and a Master's degree in Integrated Marketing Communications from Northwestern. She serves as a trustee in the Village of Park Forest and a Director of multiple nonprofit organizations.



is managed by the Treasurer's Office on behalf of all participants. Districts benefit from institutional-level investment management without the overhead of administering it independently.

As with any financial tool, its usefulness will depend on a district's financial policies, existing banking relationships, and the structure of its cash flow. Districts are encouraged to evaluate the program alongside their current practices.

## ePAY: Electronic Payment Processing for Local Governments

Fire protection districts commonly collect revenue through permits, inspections, and, in many cases, ambulance or medical transport billing. Processing these payments, particularly when paper-based, can require significant staff time and ongoing administrative follow-up.

ePAY is an electronic payment processing program offered through the Treasurer's Office. It allows local governments to accept online payments, including credit cards, debit cards, and ACH transfers, without building independent systems or contracting separately with payment vendors. Participating districts leverage the Treasurer's purchasing infrastructure to access competitive processing rates.

For districts that bill for hospital transport fees, ePAY can be a practical

option. Ambulance and medical transport billing has traditionally involved significant back-and-forth with residents, and offering an online payment channel can reduce that administrative burden while giving residents a more convenient way to pay.

For districts with limited administrative capacity, implementing electronic payment systems independently may require resources that are difficult to justify. ePAY provides an alternative that can be evaluated alongside existing processes. As with Illinois Funds, its applicability will vary based on district size, staffing, and current procedures.

## Learning More

Illinois Funds and ePAY are two tools available to local governments as they review financial management and administrative practices. Some districts may find these programs align well with their current needs, while others may already have comparable systems in place. Either way, the Treasurer's Office outreach team is available to answer questions and help districts assess whether either program might be a good fit.

Visit [illinoistreasurer.gov](http://illinoistreasurer.gov) or contact the outreach team directly at [outreach@illinoistreasurer.gov](mailto:outreach@illinoistreasurer.gov) for more information. ■



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# FOIA

## The Freedom of Information Act

# Receipt Means Receipt: The First District Clarifies FOIA Timing

By Quinn Crowley

A recent decision in *Balzer v. Northeast Illinois Regional Commuter Railroad Corporation*, 2026 IL App (1st) 232227, addresses an important question under the Freedom of Information Act (“FOIA”): when does a public entity “receive” an emailed FOIA request? Specifically, if a public entity uses third-party email screening software—such as software that filters emails for security reasons—how is the FOIA response deadline affected?

The *Balzer* court found that a public entity is deemed to have received an emailed FOIA request on the date it is received by the third-party screening software, regardless of when the email is actually reviewed by the public entity. Accordingly, public entities, including fire districts, must exercise diligence in monitoring spam folders and third-party software queues for emailed FOIA requests.

### I. Factual Background

The facts of *Balzer* are instructive. On July 31, 2019, Jim Balzer submitted a FOIA request to the designated FOIA email address for the Northeast Illinois Regional Commuter Railroad Corporation, more commonly known as Metra. Balzer’s email, however, did not immediately reach Metra’s FOIA officers. Instead, the email was flagged by Metra’s third-party email security screening software as suspicious and was held in quarantine for the remainder of that day.

On August 1, 2019, the third-party service notified Metra of the email’s existence, and a Metra FOIA officer released the email from quarantine. During an email exchange that same day, Metra informed Balzer that his request was unduly burdensome and repeatedly asked

**About the Author:** *Quinn W. Crowley* is a litigation associate at Ottosen DiNolfo Hasenbalg & Castaldo, Ltd. Mr. Crowley primarily focuses his practice on defending private entities against negligence and premises liability claims. Prior to joining Ottosen DiNolfo Hasenbalg & Castaldo, Ltd., Mr. Crowley worked as an attorney for the U.S. Department of Justice within the Executive Office for Immigration Review. He has extensive experience in the areas of administrative and immigration law.

him to narrow the scope of the request. Balzer refused to do so.

Ultimately, on August 8, 2019, Metra sent Balzer a formal email denying the request as unduly burdensome. Balzer subsequently filed suit against Metra, alleging that Metra failed to timely deny his request because the denial occurred on the sixth business day after the email was received by Metra’s third-party screening software. The circuit court ruled in favor of Metra, finding that it had timely responded within five business days of actually receiving and acknowledging Balzer’s email. Balzer appealed.

### II. The Appellate Court’s Decision

The appellate court first noted that FOIA requires public entities to comply with or deny a request within five business days of receipt, excluding the date of receipt itself. Interpreting the meaning of “receipt,” the court concluded that Metra received Balzer’s request at the moment Balzer sent the email to Metra’s designated FOIA email address. In other words, Metra came into possession of the request when it was received by the third-party screening software—even though Metra personnel were not made aware of the email until the following day.

To illustrate this point, the court offered a hypothetical scenario in which a Metra mail clerk receives a physical FOIA request but fails to deliver it to the FOIA office until the next day. In such a

case, the request would unquestionably be deemed “received” when it arrived at the mail office, not when it was ultimately delivered. The court found the role of the third-party email screening software to be legally indistinguishable from that of the mail clerk. As a result, the court held that public entities are responsible for complying with FOIA’s five-day deadline regardless of whether they use third-party email screening tools.

The court also rejected Metra’s argument that its August 1, 2019 email exchange with Balzer constituted a timely denial. Although Metra’s FOIA officer repeatedly requested that the scope of the request be narrowed and referenced the unduly burdensome nature of the request, the court emphasized that Metra never formally denied the request during that exchange.

### III. Practical Implications

*Balzer* makes clear that the five-business-day response period under FOIA begins when an emailed FOIA request is received by a public entity’s email system—even if the email is intercepted by a spam filter or third-party screening software. Accordingly, public entities, including fire protection districts, must take affirmative steps to ensure that emailed FOIA requests are promptly identified and addressed.

As a practical matter, public entities should consider consulting with their

*Continued on page 41*

## FOIA Timing

Continued from page 40

information technology experts to determine whether spam filters or third-party email screening software are in place and, if so, how those systems operate. Key questions include whether designated FOIA officers receive notifications of quarantined emails and what steps are required to access or release such emails. In *Balzer*, for example, the third-party software notified Metra of the quarantined email, allowing a FOIA officer to release it. Depending on the system used, FOIA officers may need to actively monitor spam folders or quarantine queues to ensure timely identification of FOIA requests.

Timely identification is essential to avoiding the consequences of a missed deadline. As reiterated by the *Balzer* panel, FOIA permits a public entity to extend the five-day response deadline under certain circumstances pursuant to 5 ILCS

140/3(e). However, if a FOIA request is not identified within the initial five-day period, the public entity cannot invoke an extension. A failure to timely comply, deny, or extend is treated as a denial, which carries significant consequences: (1) the public entity may not charge fees for any records ultimately produced, and (2) the public entity waives any argument that the request is unduly burdensome. In *Balzer*, Metra's failure to respond timely resulted in a waiver of its unduly burdensome defense and required Metra to pay attorney's fees and costs. These consequences underscore the importance of promptly identifying and responding to emailed FOIA requests.

The court emphasized that public entities are entitled to implement reasonable safeguards to protect against cybersecurity threats, including spam filters and third-party screening software. However, the use of such safeguards does not excuse noncompliance with FOIA deadlines. Public entities—including fire

districts—must remain vigilant in ensuring that quarantined or filtered emails are reviewed in a timely manner.

Finally, *Balzer* serves as a cautionary reminder regarding the importance of formal denials under FOIA. While requesting that a requester narrow the scope of a burdensome request may be appropriate under Section 3(g), such communications do not constitute a denial. To be effective, a denial must comply with Section 9 of FOIA, which requires written notice of the denial, the specific reasons for denial, identification of the responsible attorney or FOIA officer, and notice of the requester's right to seek review. Fire districts and other public entities should ensure that these statutory requirements are fully satisfied whenever a FOIA request is denied. ■



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# 81st Annual IAFPD CONFERENCE

# It's Time to GET IT DONE!

**June 11-13, 2026**

**Embassy Suites Riverfront Conference Center  
East Peoria, Illinois**

***New Location, Same High-Quality Program***

## **2026 Conference Committee:**

### **Program Chairman:**

Ken Yeakley, Hammond FPD

### **Exhibit Chairman:**

Don Mueller, Emerald Mound FPD

### **Committee Members:**

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Carolyn Clifford, Ottosen Law

Shawn Flaherty, Ottosen Law

Ann Joyce, Dunlap FPD

Art Kilberg, Fulton FPD

Don Loos, Liberty FPD

Damon Schuldt, Martinton FPD

Steve Schultz, Limestone Kankakee FPD

James Sinclair, Stobbs & Sinclair, Ltd.

### **Staff:**

Cheri Breneman, Association Administrator

Karrie Beneky, Administrative Assistant

Kathy Ridley, Program Coordinator

Tamiko Kinkade, Graphic Artist

## **Notice to IAFPD Members**

The **Annual Membership Meeting** will be held in conjunction with the 81st Annual Conference on Thursday, June 11, 2026 at 4:00 pm at the Embassy Suites Riverfront Conference Center, East Peoria, IL. Membership Credentials Certification is required to vote at the Annual Meeting. One vote per District by Credentials or by Proxy (**Mailed to Member Districts in April**).

## ***A Message from Your Conference Committee...***

Mark your calendars because you don't want to miss out on this unique opportunity. This year, our Conference theme is simple but urgent: ***"It is Time to Get It Done!"***

As we celebrate our nation's 250th birthday, we honor the visionaries who built a foundation of liberty through grit and determination. Their legacy reminds us that progress isn't accidental - it's a choice made by those willing to do the hard work. At the same time, we will observe the 25th Anniversary of 9/11. Remembering the resilience and unity that defined our country in the face of immense challenge. That spirit of "coming together to move forward" is exactly what we need today.

While celebrating these two moments in history, we will present the same quality of Conference that our members have come to expect, but at a different venue. We will be at the Embassy Suites Conference Center in East Peoria.

We have many educational breakouts on Thursday and a few more on Saturday. The 3 Part Essential Trustee Training begins on Thursday, Part 2 on Friday afternoon, and Part 3 on Saturday. We are also presenting an EMS track this year, along with our traditional Pension, Administration, and Operations tracks. Thursday afternoon, after the breakout sessions, will be our Annual Membership Meeting, followed by the Open Forum, where you can get all your questions answered for free.

On Friday, we will have a Keynote panel featuring Mike Dugan and George Healy, who were at the World Trade Center on 9/11, moderated by Chief Jim Grady. Following the ceremonious Flag Raising, the day is devoted to our supporting vendors and sponsors, who showcase the latest equipment and technology. There will be live demos and a few 10-minute legal tips sessions during tradeshow hours. There will also be an area for antique equipment and trucks. The evening will conclude with an outdoor social event on the hotel's terrace overlooking the river with light snacks and beverages. Dan the Piano Man will entertain us with his piano music and maybe some patriotic songs.

Saturday morning, we will begin with the Fire Service Memorial to honor those we have lost in the past year, as well as all those who perished on 9/11. Following the Memorial will be more breakouts to finish out our Conference.

History has given us the foundation and the strength; now it's up to us to take action, so I encourage you to bring your Trustees, Chiefs, and neighboring districts to this year's Conference. We aren't just here to discuss ideas; we are here to execute them. Whether it's solving industry hurdles or building a better future for our communities, the time for hesitation has passed.

Let's use the IAFPD Conference to turn our collective energy into results. It's time to honor our past by securing our future. ***"It is Time to Get It Done!"***

***Ken Yeakley, Hammond FPD, Conference Chairman***

# At-a-Glance Conference Agenda

THURSDAY JUNE 11	
7:00 am - 5:00 pm	Registration Open
7:00 am	Continental Breakfast
7:30am - 11:30 am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Essential Trustee Training Part 1: FPD organization</b></li> </ul>
9:00am - 10:15 am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Private Market Investments: What they are and why public pension funds need to invest in them?</b></li> <li>• <b>TIFs &amp; Tax Objections</b></li> <li>• <b>Don't Get Burned: Dos &amp; Don'ts in Buying Used Apparatus</b></li> <li>• <b>Financing an Ambulance, Billing &amp; Special Services</b></li> <li>• <b>CESSA</b></li> </ul>
9:00 am - 11:00 am	Guest Program - Quilters and Crafters Lounge
10:15am - 10:30am	Refreshment Break
10:30am - 11:45am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Securing Records, Moving away from e-mailing documents</b></li> <li>• <b>Case Law Update (incl Rev. Group Antitrust)</b></li> <li>• <b>Fire Commissioner's Hiring Issues</b></li> <li>• <b>IDPH Roundtable</b></li> </ul>
11:45am - 1:00pm	Lunch & Awards
1:15pm - 2:30pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Pension Retirement Benefit Calculation Issues</b></li> <li>• <b>Tort Immunity &amp; Liability for FPDs (incl \$31M judgement w/Rock Falls)</b></li> <li>• <b>Command &amp; Control: Fire Dynamics</b></li> <li>• <b>Audits / AFR / Financial Reporting</b></li> <li>• <b>Resilient Members</b></li> </ul>
1:15 pm - 4:00 pm	Guest Program - Quilters and Crafters Lounge
2:30pm - 2:45pm	Refreshment Break
2:45pm - 4:00pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>FOIA Harassment (FOIA Wars)</b></li> <li>• <b>Volunteer District Consolidation: Should You Consider It and How?</b></li> <li>• <b>The Way Home</b></li> <li>• <b>Physician Emergency Response Program</b></li> </ul>
4:00 pm - 4:15 pm	Annual Membership Meeting
4:15 pm - 5:00 pm	Pre - Conference Meet & Greet
5:00 pm - 6:00 pm	<b>Open Forum</b>
5:00 pm - 6:00 pm	Outdoor Vendor Move-in Option
5:00 pm - 7:00 pm	Indoor Tradeshow Decorator Set Up
FRIDAY JUNE 12	
7:00 am - 4:00 pm	Registration Open
7:00 AM	Continental Breakfast
7:30 am - 10:00 am	Indoor & Outdoor Vendor Move In
8:00am - 9:45 am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Opening: Reflections from the Front Line (FDNY on 9-11)</b></li> </ul>
9:00 am - 4:00 pm	Guest Program - Quilters and Crafters Lounge
9:45am - 10:30 am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Agency Updates</b></li> </ul>
10:45am - 11:00 am	Flag Raising Ceremony (outdoors)
11:00 am - 5:00 pm	Exhibits Open (Inside & Outside)
12:00 PM	Lunch with Vendors
12:30 pm - 4:30 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Essential Trustee Training Part 2 Procurement</b></li> <li>• <b>IFSI Training Prop &amp; NIFSAB Sprinkler Demo</b></li> </ul>
1:00 pm - 1:45 pm	
2:00 pm	Industry Partner Recognition
5:00 pm	Reception hosted by Ottosen Law
6:00pm - 8:00 pm	Dinner on Your Own
8:00pm - 10:00 pm	<b>Outdoor Social Event</b>
SATURDAY JUNE 13	
7:00 am - 11:30 am	Registration Open
7:00am	Hot Breakfast in Hall
8:30 am	Fire Service Memorial
9:00 am - 1:00 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Essential Trustee Training Part 3</b></li> </ul>
9:00 am - 10:00am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Annual Legislative Update</b></li> </ul>
9:00 am - 1:00 pm	Guest Program - Quilters and Crafters Lounge
9:45 am - 10:00am	Refreshment Break
10:00am - 11:15am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Radio Communications</b></li> </ul>
11:15am - 12:30pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Chatham YNOT Incident Lessons Learned (pending)</b></li> </ul>

# General Information

## Conference Venue & Tradeshow Facility

The Embassy Suites Riverfront Conference Center overlooks the Illinois River and located next to East Peoria Riverfront Park and five minutes from downtown area's historic sites and museums.



## Registration

All attendees must register online at [IAFPD.org](http://IAFPD.org) by June 6. Discounted rates are available for registrations submitted by May 30. Member-only rates apply to individuals listed in IAFPD's membership portal, GlueUp, and you must use the email address associated with your member profile to receive the discounted rate. If you are unsure of your membership status, please contact us before registering. If you have not yet claimed your GlueUp profile, we are happy to assist you. For help with online registration, please contact IAFPD at 217-525-6620. Attendees will receive a confirmation email along with important details regarding their participation.

**Registration** includes a name badge that allows admission to all educational sessions the tradeshow, door prize drawings and special events. Registration also includes breakfast each day and lunch on Thursday and Friday.

	<u>Before May 30</u>	<u>After May 30</u>
Full Conference (Member)	\$150	\$225
Full Conference with ETT	\$250	\$325
One Day Registration (One day must select which day)	\$90	\$190
Guest Registration Fee	\$75	\$125

## ETT Registration

This registration category includes the conference registration plus admittance to the 3-part (12-hour) Essential trustee Training, session handouts, and admittance to the online presentation of IAFPD Opening Meetings Act training (to be held via live webinar in July).

## Guest and Spouse Registration

The IAFPD Conference welcomes family and/or guests to walk the tradeshow and take part in the social gatherings being offered. Guests can register separately or be added to the fire districts registration but must be affiliated with fire protection district and not a commercial business.

**Register Today!**  
**Sign-up before May 30th**  
**and Save!**



**217-525-6620 - [www.iafpd.org](http://www.iafpd.org)**

## ADA and Services for the Hearing Impaired

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, the IAFPD will make all reasonable efforts to accommodate persons with disabilities. If you have special needs, contact Cheri Breneman at 217-525-6620.

## Parking

Ample free parking is available at the Embassy Suites Riverfront Conference Center. A portion of the Embassy Suites parking will be closed and reserved for vendor displays and vehicles but should not impact conference attendee parking options.

## Hotel Information

Embassy Suites - 100 Conference Cener Dr. East Peoria, 61611  
309-694-0200

Group Code: 934 – Locate direct link on [IAFPD.org](http://IAFPD.org).

<https://www.hilton.com/en/hotels/piaeses-embassy-suites-east-peoria-riverfront-hotel-and-conference-center/>

\$130.00/night - 2-night minimum required to book

Room Block deadline: May 20

Additional lodging is available within the area, however the IAFPD has secured this block for its members and the convenience and amenities it lends to their attendance plans.

## Tradeshow

The tradeshow hours are Friday from 11:00 am to 5:00 pm. Name badges are required for entry onto the tradeshow floor. A one-day exhibit hall pass may be purchased for \$25 but must be done no later than May 30 and may have limited access.

## Online Registration Tips

- If someone else is registering for you, be sure they know whether you need ETT or continuing education (CE) hours.
- You'll need your Glue Up Member profile activated which requires an independent email for individual access to the new platform, all events and communities. Your individual email address is your key to all conference-related communication.
- Choose the correct registration option—full conference attendance or Essential Trustee Training. *Note: You must be registered for ETT to receive certification.*

For questions, please call IAFPD at 217-525-6620 or email Karrie Beneky at [karrie@iafpd.org](mailto:karrie@iafpd.org).

## What to Wear?

Business casual dress is suitable for the conference. It is recommended attendees bring a sweater to cope with cooler room temperatures. Friday night encourages flip flops and Hawaiian shirts to coincide with the Jimmy Buffet Parrot Head themed event.

# Essential Trustee Training (ETT)

Essential Trustee Training is an IAFFPD exclusive 12-hour training program highly recommended for all members of the Board of Trustees, but open to anyone with a desire to learn the roles and responsibilities of fire protection district administration. Trustees who complete the entire ETT Program under 70 ILCS 70/6 are entitled to additional compensation. This program curriculum is developed and presented by attorneys who specialize in local and municipal government.

**Pre-registration and additional fee is required to attend.**

- Part 1** - Organization & Administration of the FPD  
Thursday, 6/19/25 - 7:30 am – 11:30 pm
- Part 2** - Finances, Procurement, Legal Liability  
Friday, 6/20/25 - 12:30 pm – 4:30 pm
- Part 3** - Personnel and Human Resources  
Saturday, 6/21/25 - 8:30 am – 12:30 pm

 <p><b>Part 1</b> 4 hours</p>	 <p><b>Part 2</b> 4 hours</p>	 <p><b>Part 3</b> 4 hours</p>
<p><b>Fire District Organization &amp; Administration</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Statutes, Regulations &amp; Court Decisions</li> <li>Board Governance</li> <li>Trustee Powers &amp; Duties</li> <li>Policies &amp; Ordinances</li> <li>Annexation &amp; Consolidation</li> <li>Disconnection</li> </ul>	<p><b>Finances, Procurement &amp; Legal Liability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tax Levy</li> <li>Budget &amp; Appropriation Process</li> <li>Financial Reports</li> <li>Equipment Acquisition</li> <li>Bidding</li> <li>Fire Station Construction</li> <li>Legal Liability</li> </ul>	<p><b>Personnel &amp; Human Resources</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Volunteer &amp; Career Personnel</li> <li>Fire Commissioners</li> <li>Hiring &amp; Employment Laws</li> <li>Training Requirements</li> <li>Pensions &amp; Promotions</li> <li>Discipline &amp; Discharge</li> </ul>

## GUEST PROGRAM

**ATTN: QUILTERS, CRAFTERS and NEEDLEWORKERS**



- The IAFFPD Auxiliary has planned a space to gather and work on crafts together. If you have a craft, bring it with you. Bring your own machine and whatever else you need. The room will be secure at night. We will also have water, drinks and snacks available for you while we work.
- Guests are encouraged to participate in a group quilting project and asked to bring one of your fire department t-shirts.
- We will have pella available and a heated platen to bond it to the back of the shirt.
- We'll cut the shirts to a 12 ½" square. Make sure that the name fits in the 12" square. Note: the ½" is seam allowance.

***This quilt will be something we'll bring and display at IAFFPD events. Come and be a part of this new event at the conference.***

Photo Source: Vienna (IL) FD Auxiliary Facebook

# Continuing Education Hours

- **Fire Protection District Trustees (A)** Public Act 95-0799 requires trustees who have completed the Essential Trustee Training Program to fulfill a 3-hour annual continued education requirement.
- **All** sessions presented at the IAFFPD Conference satisfy this legal training requirement.
- **Pension Fund Trustees (P)** The IAFFPD Conference program offers **8 hours** of qualified pension training credit to fulfill the in ethics and pension fund administration. Some of the educational programs.

## TRU\$TEE Grant\$



The IAFFPD Foundation Scholarship program has a Trustee's Grant Program that is available to assist trustee members of the Association who are interested in attending the Annual Conference but may have financial constraints hindering their ability to participate.

**The vision of the program is simple:**

- to promote education for those serving as an elected or appointed trustee,
- to present opportunities for networking with others tasked with the same role, and
- to provide a venue to learn from the experts who provide resources, specialty services, and fire equipment utilized by the fire services.

The Foundation's Trustee Grant may award up to \$500.00 in reimbursements per recipient for the 2026 Annual Conference. Some restrictions apply and all applications will be considered. For more details and applications, visit IAFFPD.org.

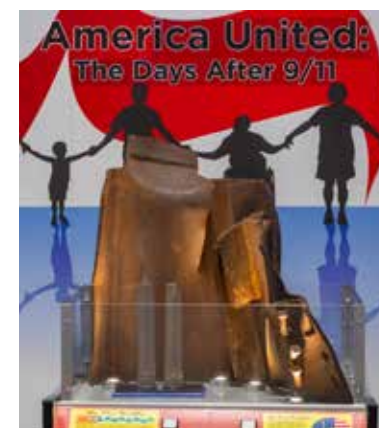
## DISCOUNTS

### An Incentive for Newcomers!



**WE WANT YOU**

The IAFFPD Foundation is excited to offer a special discount for districts that have not yet attended the Annual Conference. Eligible districts can send one member for half off full conference registration. This promotion is available to the first 40 districts that respond, so don't wait. If your district has been considering attending but faces budget constraints, this is an excellent opportunity to participate at a reduced cost. To take advantage of this limited-time offer, please call 217-525-6620 to secure your spot.



## 911 Exhibit

*IAFFPD welcomes the American United traveling 911 Exhibit display to the conference in remembrance of The Days After 9/11. The display includes a scrupulously accurate time-line of that day and a breakdown of facts and events, the exhibit is centered upon what happened in the aftermath.*

# Special Events

## **Honor & Recognition Awards Presentation Luncheon**

**Thursday 11:45 am – 1:00 pm**

IAFPD uses the annual conference as an opportunity to recognize the members who have served multiple terms of office with their respective fire districts (Trustee's Years of Service Recognition) as well as a few select members who have demonstrated "outstanding Service" in their fire community or with the IAFPD. The Awards Lunch is included in conference registration fee and is a great time to bring your fellow district members together for a meal.

## **Evening Reception in the Conference Center**

**Thursday 6:00 pm**

After the Open Forum, please join other conference attendees, guests and vendors for this opportunity to unwind after a long day of education and enjoy some tasty food and complimentary beverages.

## **Opening Ceremony**

**Friday 8:00 to 10:30 am**

Friday kicks off with a special tribute to a tragic day that profoundly affected our nation 25 years ago, the city of New York, and forever changed the landscape of the fire services.

## **Salute to America**

**Friday at 10:45 am**

The traditional ceremony that honors our country by raising the flag (weather permitting) just following the opening session and introduction to the outdoor vendor display,

## **Party on the Terrace**

**Friday Night Social Event - Friday at 8:00 – 10:00 pm**

The conference committee invites all attendees to enjoy an evening of fresh air, a lovely view of the Illinois River and city skyline while listening to a live piano music performance (and sing-along) with cold beverages and fellowship.

## **Fire Service Memorial**

**Saturday, 8:30 am**

This special dedication to honor fallen firefighters and other members of the Illinois fire service who have passed away during the past year. The event welcomes family and fire department members to attend, share and remember with special music, flowers and a special reading. To include a person on the necrology and program, please be sure to notify IAFPD before May 15. You can submit a name on the conference page of the IAFPD website ([www.iafpd.org](http://www.iafpd.org)).

# Keynote Speakers

## **OPENING SESSION - FRIDAY, JUNE 12**

### **REFLECTIONS FROM THE FRONT LINE**

The opening session will pay tribute to a tragic day that profoundly affected our nation 25 years ago, the City of New York, and forever changed the landscape of the fire service. This session features an interactive, talk-show-style discussion with fire service leaders who confronted unprecedented challenges during and in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks. The guests will be drawing on firsthand experience and will reflect on leadership under crisis, lessons learned, and how those experiences continue to shape the fire service today.



**MICHAEL M. DUGAN**, a 42-year veteran of the fire service, is also a 27-year member of the Fire Department of New York (FDNY), where he retired as the captain of Ladder Company 123. As a lieutenant, he served in Ladder Company 42 in the South Bronx and was a firefighter on Ladder 43. He is a member of the FDIC International and Fire Engineering advisory boards and is proud recipient of the 2020 Tom Brennan Lifetime Achievement Award.



**DEPUTY CHIEF GEORGE K. HEALY** is currently a deputy chief with the New York City Fire Department (FDNY), assigned to Division 13 in South Queens. He began his career with the FDNY in April of 1991 where he worked his way through the ranks to his current position. He is an instructor for FDNY's Battalion Chief Command Course, the Deputy Chief Development Course and Chiefs Education Day. George is an inaugural member of the Fire Safety Research Institute (FSRI), part of UL Research Institutes, advisory board. Currently a deputy chief with FDNY, George utilizes FSRI's fire safety research every day.



**CHIEF JAMES M. GRADY III** retired after 40+ years with Frankfort Fire Protection District and 29 years as Chief who started as a proud volunteer. He is the former Executive Director of the Illinois Fire Chiefs Association and holds a master's degree in public administration with numerous state and national certifications. He served as a field instructor with VCOS Beyond Hoses & Helmets along with staff and the Illinois Fire Service Institute and several community colleges and universities. He is a longstanding member of Illinois Firefighters Medal of Honor Committee & Foundation as well as IAFPD.

## **Top 10 Reasons to Attend:**

- *Earn Continued Education Hours*
- *3-Part Essential Trustee Training Offered*
- *Dynamic Speakers Presenting Timely & Relevant Topics*
- *Interactive Tradeshow*
- *Demonstrations*
- *Entertaining Networking Events*
- *Fire Service Memorial*
- *Recognition Awards*
- *Guests Welcome!*
- *Meet the President!*





# IAFPD FOUNDATION TRUSTEES' SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM



The Illinois Association of Fire Protection Districts Foundation's Scholarship Committee announces the application period is open to assist trustee members of the Association who are interested in attending the Annual Conference, but may have financial constraints hindering their ability to participate.

The vision of the program is simple: to promote education for those serving as an elected or appointed trustee, to present opportunities for networking with others tasked with the same role, and to provide a venue to learn from the experts who provide resources, specialty services and fire equipment utilized by the fire services.

The Foundation's Trustee Scholarship may award up to \$500.00 per recipient for the Annual Conference and up to 20 qualified fire protection district trustees. Some restrictions apply and all applications will be considered.

**Interested members must submit Trustee Scholarship Application no later than May 5, 2026. Send completed form to IAFPD via email: [info@iafpd.org](mailto:info@iafpd.org), or mail to: 1201 S. 6<sup>th</sup> St. Springfield, IL 62703.**

## Trustee Scholarship Guidelines & Application

- Scholarships are awarded for attendance of the IAFPD Annual Conference in June.
- Scholarship recipient's fire protection district must be an IAFPD member in good standing.
- Recipients are reimbursed up to \$500.00 upon submission of receipts after conference.
- Reimbursements are limited to reasonable expenses incurred by attending conference (meals, lodging at conference host hotel or other approved location, mileage at federal rate and/or registration fees).
- Proof of conference attendance required for reimbursement (sign in at registration)
- Grantees must be trustees serving their first (or second) term of office.
- Applicants must describe the need for financial assistance, budget issues or financial constraints of the applicant and/or district which support the request for assistance

Fire Protection District: \_\_\_\_\_

Applicant Name \_\_\_\_\_ Title/Affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

\*Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Appointed/Elected: \_\_\_\_\_ Have you ever attended the IAFPD Conference? Yes / No

Describe your financial need, funding constraint or reasons you are applying for the trustee scholarship.

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If awarded a scholarship, will you commit to full conference, including the closing session on Saturday? Yes / No

Select (3) topics are you most interested in seeing presented at the conference?

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trustee Training | <input type="checkbox"/> Legislative Update | <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Consolidation    | <input type="checkbox"/> Pension            | <input type="checkbox"/> Financial Reporting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health    | <input type="checkbox"/> Firefighter Cancer | <input type="checkbox"/> Keynote             |

All applicants are notified by email of IAFPD's receipt of their application and again if they are granted a scholarship.

**QUESTIONS? CALL 217-525-6620 or VISIT US ONLINE AT IAFPD.ORG**

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# IN THE NEWS



## Congratulations!



Congratulations to John Cumbee on being named Firefighter of the Year by his peers at the Cornbelt Fire Protection District. With more than 21 years of dedicated service, Cumbee continues to demonstrate the passion that first drew him to firefighting prior to serving with Cornbelt. When he is not working his day job as the fire marshal at Willard Airport, an article in The News Gazette by reporter Rob Le Caters claims Cumbee can likely be found at the fire house. He was commended for his leadership, mentorship, and commitment to the department. Selected through a peer-nominated process, this special recognition reflects the respect of his crew members and the impact he makes each day.



*Thank you IAFPD Foundation Directors Bonnie Bayser and Paul Grzelak for representing IAFPD at The Friends of Camp I Am Me recognition reception on March 5th. The event celebrates the volunteers and donors who make a lasting impact on the organization.*

# IN MEMORY



William "Bill" Artman (82) of Freeport, passed away on September 4, 2025. Bill married Jan Scheider on June 2, 1963. He worked at several Chevrolet dealerships from 1962 to 2005. He served in the Army Reserves for 6 years, belonged to the Cedarville Fire Dept for 26 years and was a longtime member of the Cedarville Snow Travelers Snowmobile Club. Bill started farming in the mid 70's.



**Bradford L. Janzen** (83) of Peoria passed away on June 6, 2025. He was born in Rochester, MN and married Vicky Lindemann on October 5, 1974, in Ottawa, IL. She survives. He is also survived by his son and daughter and five grandchildren. He served as the elementary school principal at Illini Bluffs CUSD #327 from 1970-2003. He was a Hollis Park District commissioner for 20 years and served as a volunteer firefighter with the Timber-Hollis Fire Protection District 1973-2003 and trustee from 1978 to 2025.



**Cyrus "Cy" Jay Bunting** (83) passed away on March 2, 2026, after an extended illness. A devoted father, grandfather, great-grandfather, and public servant, Cy lived a life defined by compassion, service, and love for family. A skilled craftsman with a background in facilities management and engineering, Cy worked at Principia College, Ralston-Purina, Erickson Chemical, and owned several small businesses. He served his community as Mayor of Elsah, Special Deputy Sheriff, and lifelong volunteer firefighter, beginning at age 14. He was Chairman of the QEM Fire Protection District Board until January 2026.



**Steven W. Woods** (67), of Fulton, IL, died Friday, February 27, 2026. Steve was born July 13, 1958, in Clinton, IA, 1976 graduated from Clinton High School. Steve was employed at Metform for 40 years, retiring in 2024. He was also a dedicated volunteer with the Fulton Fire Department for 26 years. Steve enjoyed coaching youth football and baseball for many years, sharing his time and encouragement with countless young athletes. Survivors include his wife of 32 years, Mickey Woods; five children and fifteen grandchildren, six great-grandchildren; and his beloved dog, Rizzo.



**Brett Kunkel (69)** We are deeply saddened to announce the sudden passing of Brett P. Kunkel on March 29, 2026. He was born on April 19, 1956, in [St. Louis, MO](#). Brett dedicated his life to his family, service, friendship and leaves behind a legacy of courage and hard work. He officially joined as a volunteer fire fighter in 1974 and became the Chief of the Sorento Fire Department in 1980. Brett P. worked diligently to create a district as well as annexation of Panama, Donnellson, and later Walshville to create the existing Shoal Creek Fire Protection District. In 1989 Brett had become an area representative for the IAFPD, and by the time of his death Brett had earned a position as President. In addition to his service as a firefighter, Brett worked as coal miner at Monterey Coal #1 for 30 years.

Brett is survived by his four daughters and spouses, thirteen grandkids and two great grandchildren, three brothers, their spouses many nieces, nephews and cousins.

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# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**May 5**

**Outstanding Service & Trustee's Years of Service Award Nominations Due**

**May 5**

**IAFPD Conference Scholarship Application Deadline**

**May 5 - 7**

**IFCA Symposium**  
*Par-a-Dice, East Peoria*

**May 12**

**2025 Medal of Honor Ceremony**  
*BoS Center, Springfield*

**June 11**

**IAFPD Annual Membership Meeting**  
*Embassy Suites Conference Center, East Peoria*

**June 11 - 13**

**Essential Trustee Training (Parts 1, 2 & 3)**  
*Embassy Suites Conference Center, East Peoria*

**June 11 & June 13**

**Board of Directors Quarterly Meeting (Association & Foundation)**  
*East Peoria*

**June 14 - 20**

**IFSA 'Camp I Am Me'**  
*Ingleside*

**July 10**

**The Fire Call Copy Deadline**

**July 16**

**IAFPD Open Meetings Act Training**  
*Live Webinar*

**August 14**

**IAFPD Day at the Illinois State Fair**  
*Springfield*

**August 21**

**IAFPD Foundation Golf Outing**  
*Oak Springs Golf Course, St. Anne*

**Sept 19**

**Board of Directors Quarterly Meeting (Association & Foundation)**  
*East Peoria*

**IAFPD Offices will be closed in observance of the following holidays:**

May 25 - Memorial Day

July 4 - Independence Day

*Details about many of the events mentioned above can be found at [www.iafpd.org](http://www.iafpd.org) or, by contacting the association at: 217-525-6620*

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