
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

SENATE BILL

No. 245 Session of
2021

INTRODUCED BY BROOKS, ARGALL, YAW, STEFANO, MARTIN, VOGEL,
MENSCH, HUTCHINSON, YUDICHAK, BAKER AND PITTMAN,
FEBRUARY 18, 2021

REFERRED TO VETERANS AFFAIRS AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS,
FEBRUARY 18, 2021

AN ACT

1 Providing for counties and municipalities to distribute
2 emergency funds to fire companies during the COVID-19
3 pandemic and for distribution and receipt of funds.

4 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
5 hereby enacts as follows:

6 Section 1. Short title.

7 This act shall be known and may be cited as the COVID-19
8 Emergency Relief for Fire Companies Act.

9 Section 2. Legislative findings.

10 The General Assembly finds and declares as follows:

11 (1) A novel coronavirus, known as COVID-19, entered the
12 United States in late January 2020 and has spread throughout
13 the states, including this Commonwealth.

14 (2) On March 6, 2020, the Governor declared a disaster
15 emergency, citing a threat of imminent disaster that is of
16 such a magnitude and severity as to necessitate extraordinary
17 measures to protect the health, safety and life of this

1 Commonwealth's residents.

2 (3) On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization
3 (WHO) declared COVID-19 a pandemic.

4 (4) In order to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, the
5 Governor and the Secretary of Health urged the residents of
6 this Commonwealth to adhere to the practice of "social
7 distancing" and to self-quarantine if feeling ill or
8 exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19.

9 (5) Consequently, fire companies in this Commonwealth
10 have been unable to conduct fundraising activities as a
11 result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

12 (6) The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, including all
13 the necessary measures taken to mitigate the spread of the
14 disease, has severely disrupted the financial standing for
15 fire companies in this Commonwealth.

16 (7) Due to the unprecedented economic hardships faced by
17 fire companies in this Commonwealth during the COVID-19
18 pandemic, it is imperative that counties are allowed to
19 utilize different funding mechanisms to maintain the
20 operations of fire companies and preserve the health and
21 safety of residents of this Commonwealth.

22 Section 3. Definitions.

23 The following words and phrases when used in this act shall
24 have the meanings given to them in this section unless the
25 context clearly indicates otherwise:

26 "County." A county or home rule charter county of any
27 classification.

28 "COVID-19 pandemic." The disease that is causing the 2019
29 novel coronavirus outbreak and global pandemic. The term
30 includes the novel coronavirus, coronavirus disease 2019 or

1 2019-nCoV.

2 "Disaster emergency." The proclamation of disaster emergency
3 issued by the Governor on March 6, 2020, published at 50 Pa.B.
4 1644 (March 21, 2020), and any renewal of the state of disaster
5 emergency.

6 "Fire company." A volunteer fire company or municipal fire
7 company in this Commonwealth.

8 "Municipality." Any of the following:

9 (1) As defined in any of the following:

10 (i) Section 1(1) of the act of May 12, 1943
11 (P.L.259, No.120), referred to as the Foreign Casualty
12 Insurance Premium Tax Allocation Law.

13 (ii) Section 702 of the act of December 18, 1984
14 (P.L.1005, No.205), known as the Municipal Pension Plan
15 Funding Standard and Recovery Act.

16 (2) A city, borough, town or township.

17 "Volunteer fire company." A nonprofit chartered corporation,
18 association or organization located in this Commonwealth which
19 provides fire protection services and other voluntary emergency
20 services within this Commonwealth, including voluntary ambulance
21 and voluntary rescue services.

22 Section 4. Emergency distribution of funds to fire companies.

23 (a) Authorization.--Notwithstanding any other provision of
24 law, in order to mitigate the negative economic consequences of
25 the COVID-19 pandemic on fire companies, all of the following
26 may be distributed by a county or municipality to fire companies
27 within their respective jurisdiction:

28 (1) Grants distributed by the Office of the State Fire
29 Commissioner for emergency medical services and fire
30 services.

1 (2) Grants distributed by the Office of the State Fire
2 Commissioner for fire relief associations.

3 (3) Notwithstanding the act of May 12, 1943 (P.L.259,
4 No.120), referred to as the Foreign Casualty Insurance
5 Premium Tax Allocation Law, Article IX of the act of March 4,
6 1971 (P.L.6, No.2), known as the Tax Reform Code of 1971, and
7 Chapter 7 of the act of December 18, 1984 (P.L.1005, No.205),
8 known as the Municipal Pension Plan Funding Standard and
9 Recovery Act.

10 (4) Notwithstanding 4 Pa.C.S. Ch. 14 (relating to
11 revenues), revenue distributed to the county or municipality
12 from the State Gaming Fund.

13 (5) Notwithstanding 58 Pa.C.S. Ch. 23 (relating to
14 unconventional gas well fee), revenue distributed to the
15 county or municipality from the unconventional gas well fee.

16 (6) Any other funding sources to fire companies within
17 the county or municipality.

18 (b) Prohibition.--A county may not utilize any of the
19 following under subsection (a):

20 (1) Federal funds appropriated to the Commonwealth for a
21 specific purpose.

22 (2) Funds designated for a specific purpose in a
23 contract or agreement executed by the county before the
24 effective date of this act.

25 (3) Funds designated for a specific purpose in a
26 contract or agreement between a Commonwealth entity and a
27 fire company.

28 Section 5. Distribution and receipt of funds.

29 (a) Authorization.--A county or municipality may distribute
30 funds under section 4(a) to fire companies within the county or

1 municipality for any of the following:

2 (1) The payment of utility bills.

3 (2) The payment of mortgage or rent expenses.

4 (3) Any other bill or expenses necessary to maintain the
5 fire service of fire companies.

6 (b) Receipt.--A county or municipality that utilizes the
7 funds under section 4(a) shall distribute the funds to fire
8 companies within the county or municipality on a first-come,
9 first-served basis.

10 Section 6. Expiration.

11 This act shall expire on the same date as the termination or
12 expiration of the declared disaster emergency.

13 Section 7. Effective date.

14 This act shall take effect immediately.