

Testimony for September 5th, 2019

Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Hearing on First Responder Education Benefits and Incentives

From the Blairsville Volunteer Fire Company

Given by Albert Dettorre, Company Vice President. Mr Dettorre will be speaking for the department, attending with George "Turk" Burkley, Company Chief.

Although we agree with idea of college tuition as an incentive, in most instances, it is not beneficial to the person above college age that would like to join the fire service. It is also not useful to retain the majority of current members above that college age. We would like to look at the following ideas:

- State and local tax breaks for the **active** members of all ages
- Reduced vehicle registration rates for **active** members of all ages
- Some of the required training classes be made available on line. We realize that some are hands on and cannot be,

but others could.
- Reimbursement for training
- With limited manpower available, an incentive for the employer to permit the firefighter to leave work to assist when

additional help is needed.
- To support HR-1550
- Any job creation in the area that would help to rebuild the population, would give the departments an increased possibility of additional members.
- Incentives for departments that would share equipment and manpower / merge.

It is our feeling that with the number of unpaid hours we devote to public safety, either on calls, in training, or fundraising to keep our equipment in operation; your support for additional funding of grants and more low interest loans would be greatly appreciated. With all the incentives listed above, we realize that there would have to be accountability between the departments and the Government.

Thank you.