

**WASHINGTON, DC** - Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (D-MD) applauded passage today of H.R. 3791, the Fire Grants Reauthorization Act. This legislation reauthorizes for another five years the FIRE and SAFER grant programs, which provide competitive grants to under-resourced fire departments and emergency units to help meet critical staffing, training and equipment needs.

“Every day, we and our families live under the blanket of protection provided by America's firefighters—men and women who are willing to risk their lives to safeguard us, our loved ones, and our property,” **said Congressman Hoyer.** “To honor the service and sacrifices of America's firefighters, and to make our communities safer places to live, Congress has worked to become a partner with fire departments across the nation. And today, we reaffirm that commitment by reauthorizing two successful grant programs for firefighters.”

The FIRE grant program authorizes \$1 billion per year for state-of-the-art equipment, up-to-date training, and fire prevention programs. These competitive grants will benefit career, volunteer, and combination fire departments throughout the country, as well as state training academies and volunteer EMS departments. The SAFER grant program ensures that community firehouses never have to sit empty: its \$1.2 billion per year will help ensure that eligible departments are fully staffed, so that there are always firefighters on duty in case of emergency. It also commits money each year to help volunteer departments recruit and retain new members.

Since 2001, the FIRE program has provided more than \$55 million in assistance to first-responder organizations in Maryland for the purchase of personnel protective gear and response equipment and vehicles, while SAFER has sent more than \$6.5 million in assistance to help meet staffing needs.

As co-chair of the Congressional Fire Caucus, Rep. Hoyer took a lead role in helping establish the FIRE program and has been an annual leader in fighting against attempts to cut funding for the program in the federal budget. In the current Congress, he helped secure \$390 million. The program also received an additional \$210 million as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act for modification and construction of firehouses.

Congressman Hoyer also helped establish the SAFER program to help fire departments hire new firefighters, recruit and retain volunteer firefighters, and provide relief to stations currently operating short of staff. During this Congress, Rep. Hoyer helped secure \$410 million for the program.

&quot;It is critical that first responders are provided all available resources to enhance their ability to protect our communities from harm. I will continue to fully support these programs in order to meet the needs of our nation's firefighters,&quot; **said Congressman Hoyer**.

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