



October 20, 2025

The Honorable John Thune
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Leader Thune, Speaker Johnson, Leader Schumer, and Leader Jeffries,

On behalf of the more than 360,000 members of the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) and the approximately 12,000 members of the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC), we urge Congress to reopen the federal government and ensure federal fire fighters receive the full back pay and benefits that they have earned during the shutdown. Congress should not allow vital public safety services to suffer, or fire fighters to be denied their pay, simply because the legislative process is at an impasse.

Every day, federal fire fighters protect our nation's military installations, airfields, research labs, veterans' health facilities, and critical infrastructure. These men and women are "excepted" workers and, since October 1, have reported for work despite not being paid. The added uncertainty of how these fire fighters will pay their bills during the shutdown only magnifies the stress that they already face from their grueling 72-hour work weeks. This uncertainty cannot continue. Congress must allow these fire fighters to return to their regular pay schedule and to receive their full back pay and benefits as has been the precedent following previous shutdowns.

The current government shutdown has also created other challenges for these fire fighters by denying them timely access to workers' compensation benefits and pausing research projects and regulatory efforts aimed at keeping fire fighters healthy and safe on the job. While fire fighters knowingly accept a dangerous and difficult job, our nation has a duty to help them stay as safe and healthy as possible. This shutdown directly contradicts that commitment and fails to deliver on the promise of standing with those on the front lines of public safety. Reopening the federal government is now the most basic way that Congress can show its commitment to fire fighters.

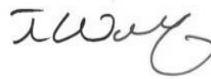
Municipal and state fire departments are also harmed by the shutdown as it blocks their ability to accept critically needed grants, including the recently announced Assistance to Firefighters Grants (AFG) and Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant awards. As of October 1, Medicare's reimbursement rates for emergency ground ambulance service were also reduced due to the lapsed authorization for Medicare to provide its extender payments for emergency ground ambulance transportation. Congress must address these budgetary challenges for local and state fire departments by reopening the government and reauthorizing Medicare's ground ambulance extender payments.

The IAFF and IAFC strongly urge Congress to act now to end this shutdown. Reopening the federal government will restore stability, uphold the government's obligations to those who serve, and ensure that fire departments at all levels of government can access the funding and support needed to serve the public.

Sincerely,



Edward A. Kelly
General President
International Association of Fire Fighters



Fire Chief Trisha Wolford
President and Board Chair
International Association of Fire Chiefs