

South Metro Fire Rescue Legislative Philosophy

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Subject: South Metro Fire Rescue Legislative Philosophy

BACKGROUND: South Metro Fire Rescue (SMFR) is a fire protection district in Colorado encompassing nearly 300 square miles in Arapahoe, Douglas and Jefferson counties. With 30 stations in the south metro Denver area, SMFR provides emergency and risk reduction services to approximately 565,000 residents and thousands more who come into our communities to work. Specifically, SMFR serves the cities of Bow Mar, Castle Pines, Centennial, Cherry Hills Village, Columbine Valley, Foxfield, Greenwood Village, Littleton, Lone Tree, and Parker, as well as the communities of Castle Pines Village, Highlands Ranch, Louviers, Centennial Airport, the Denver Tech Center, Inverness, and the Meridian Office Park as well as unincorporated portions of Arapahoe, Jefferson and Douglas counties and the Lockheed Martin campus.

SUMMARY: The following document is an overview of SMFR's legislative priorities and the subsequent approach. The following three pillars are set in place to support SMFR's mission and values: to position the organization to proactively meet the needs of its changing demographic and businesses, maintain fiscal strength and stability, and continue to be stewards of public trust and equitable treatment of all.

Our legislative approach emphasizes collaboration with stakeholders, including employees, regulatory bodies, and the community. We value diverse perspectives to ensure that our policies reflect the interests and concerns of all relevant parties. *All* legislative position statements will be informed directly by SMFR. The following is to provide a guideline, but in the event that policy arises that requires nuance, SMFR will work with the lobbyist to determine a stance.

Partnerships and Service

- SMFR prioritizes and supports legislation that aligns labor and management. This includes a legislative strategy that centers labor in participating in legislative discussions when applicable, testifying at the Capitol and getting feedback from labor on policies.
- SMFR prioritizes and supports legislation that aligns with the fire community at state-level in partnerships with Colorado State Fire Chiefs and Colorado Professional Firefighters. In practice, this looks like offering coalition support, testimony or giving expert opinions during the drafting and amendment process.
- When not in conflict with the larger fire community, in particular the State Fire Chiefs, SMFR will align and support our local government partners including but not limited to: Special Districts Association, CCI, and CML.
- SMFR believes in championing our local-level partnerships especially within the fire community; this includes our neighboring fire districts and departments. Whenever possible, SMFR will center their voices in legislative conversations and champion their success in the legislative process. SMFR will not engage in legislation that would adversely affect smaller, rural fire districts or departments.
- Our lobbying philosophy includes a focus on community engagement and education. We advocate for policies that support community outreach programs, fire safety education initiatives, and collaborative efforts to enhance community resilience and preparedness.
- Our lobbying philosophy emphasizes the importance of fire prevention and risk reduction measures. We advocate for policies that encourage proactive measures to identify and mitigate potential fire hazards, thereby reducing the frequency and severity of emergencies.

- We actively engage with lawmakers to advocate for the development and enforcement of fire safety standards. This includes lobbying for legislation that ensures compliance with building codes, fire prevention measures, and safety protocols.
- Recognizing the interconnected nature of emergency response, we actively support and lobby for policies that foster collaboration between different emergency services and agencies. This includes advocating for streamlined communication, joint training exercises, and coordinated response efforts.
- We engage in the legislative process by providing constructive feedback on proposed legislation related to fire safety and emergency response. We aim to be a valuable resource for policymakers, offering insights based on our operational experience and expertise.

Financials

- SMFR believes local governments and districts understand their finances best; for that reason, SMFR will support legislation that retains decision-making authority at the local level.
- We believe in the importance of clear and predictable regulatory frameworks. Our lobbying activities aim to foster regulatory environments that provide the most certainty for reports and disclosures.
- We prioritize compliance with existing laws and regulations while proactively identifying and mitigating risks. Our legislative philosophy includes a commitment to staying informed about legal developments and maintaining a robust compliance framework.
- We believe in educational advocacy. We strive to provide policymakers with accurate and comprehensive information to foster a deeper understanding of the complexities of fire districts and the potential impacts of proposed regulations.
- Lobbying efforts extend to advocating for investments in infrastructure and facility maintenance. Ensuring that fire stations are well-maintained and equipped with modern facilities is essential for supporting the well-being of firefighters and their ability to respond swiftly.
- Our lobbying philosophy involves advocating for sufficient budget allocations to meet the evolving needs of the fire department. This includes addressing staffing levels, equipment upgrades, and training requirements to maintain a high level of emergency response capability.

Employees and Protections

- We are committed to lobbying for adequate funding for ongoing training programs, facilities and state-of-the-art equipment for firefighters. A well-trained and well-equipped firefighting force is essential for handling diverse emergency situations.
- Recognizing the mental and emotional toll of firefighting, we actively lobby for policies that address the mental health and well-being of firefighters. This includes support for mental health services, counseling, and initiatives that promote a healthy work-life balance.
- Recognizing the physical wellbeing of employees, we actively lobby for policies that address the physical wellbeing of firefighters. This includes support for services for sick leave, injury prevention, and provider and insurance protections.
- Our lobbying efforts extend to advocating for policies that address environmental factors affecting fire risk. This includes supporting responsible planning that enhances community resilience against natural disasters.