

**Summary of Testimony
Provided for the
Veterans Affairs and Emergency preparedness Committee
of the
Senate of Pennsylvania**

October 25, 2013

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony on the subject of *The Challenges of Firefighting Today*.

As elected officials, you are the key to assuring effective public fire protection to all of us in Pennsylvania.

You do so by providing responsible legislation and appropriations to allow the agencies of the Commonwealth to fulfill their obligations and to provide a mechanism for elected officials at the municipal and county level to support to support their local emergency service organizations.

I recently served as the subject matter expert and facilitator for the Adams County Council of Governments for their project titled *Financing Fire Services for Adams County, Pennsylvania*.

A copy of the report has been provided for your reference. I encourage you to read the report thoroughly and in its entirety, as it describes the plight of the fire departments in Adams County. A summary of the findings have been attached for your convenience. While this report focuses on only one of the Commonwealth's sixty-seven counties, I believe the findings are common to almost all of them.

As members of the State Legislature, it is incumbent upon you to enact the necessary legislation to allow the counties and local municipalities, including our cities, to expand their options to generate revenue for funding local fire protection and the necessary training to support their operations.

While much of the discussion of public fire protection focuses on operations, one must remember that the fundamental premise of fire protection is fire prevention.

As such, I recommend that the Legislature authorize funding and reconvene the Commission created by SR 60 of the Session of 2003, for the purpose evaluating the outstanding issues facing the emergency service organizations today.

Effective public fire protection is a responsibility of more than the local fire departments. To be comprehensive, it must include the support of local elected officials.

Local fire protection items to be identified include the following:

- A strategic approach to fire prevention, including education, engineering, and enforcement.
- Provision of a reliable and sustainable public water supply for fire protection.
- Strategically located fire stations equipped with modern and reliable fire apparatus.
- Well trained and properly equipped individuals to effectively perform all tasks associated with the operation and administration of the emergency services organization.

These key points are only a sampling of the challenges facing Pennsylvania's firefighters today. I encourage you to share this information with your colleagues at the state and local level to further identify and resolve these issues.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

John S. Senft, Consultant
Retired Chief, Department of Fire/Rescue Services, City of York
Chairman of the Board, Fire Chiefs and Firefighters Association of York County