



NEWS RELEASE

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The VPFF Secures Cancer Screening Funding for the Commonwealth's Firefighters

June 29, 2026, Richmond, VA -Today, the Virginia General Assembly approved the Commonwealth's biennial budget which includes over \$4 million to provide life-saving cancer screenings for Virginia's firefighters. The Virginia Professional Fire Fighters (VPFF) has sought to secure this funding for the past three sessions of the Virginia General Assembly.

Included in the budget as Amendment 8, the title is to "Establish the Firefighter Cancer Screening Grant Program." The amendment passed both houses of the General Assembly by unanimous consent.

The amendment stated, "Out of the appropriation provided in this Item, \$2,000,000 from the general fund is provided over the biennium to establish the Firefighter Cancer Screening Grant program for the purpose of awarding grants to localities with qualifying fire departments or fire companies, as defined in §§ 27-6.01 and 27-6.02, Code of Virginia, for costs incurred in providing eligible cancer screening tests to career firefighters in an amount less than or equal to \$350 per eligible screening. The Department of Fire Programs and the Virginia Fire Services Board shall develop policies and procedures for the distribution of funds from this grant."

Cancer is the leading killer of firefighters across the nation. In 2025, nearly 80% of International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) members honored at the IAFF Fallen Fire Fighter Memorial died of occupational cancer (247 of 311). In addition, the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) has recognized working as a firefighter to be a Group 1 "Carcinogenic Exposure," the same level as tobacco smoking or unprotected exposure to radiation.

The VPFF initiated the call for cancer screening funding in 2024 through budget amendments requested by Senator Bill DeSteph and Delegate Israel O'Quinn. In 2025, the VPFF again sought funding with the assistance of Senator Aaron Rouse and Delegate Dolores McQuinn. This past session, Senator Jeremy McPike, Delegate Paul Krizek and Delegate Alex Askew requested the budget action. While not included in the initial General Assembly budget submission, the funding was submitted and obtained in last minute amendments due to the advocacy of the VPFF.

"This is a big deal for Virginia's firefighters," stated Kurt Detrick, President of the VPFF. "There have been too many funerals for our firefighters who have died of occupational cancer. While many departments provide this service to their firefighters, all departments in Virginia can now help find cancer early through screening and hopefully prevent these deaths. I would like to recognize Jennifer Pike, our Director of Governmental Affairs and our entire legislative team on this long-fought victory. And thank you to the General Assembly who voted to invest in the protection of Virginia's firefighters."

The Virginia Professional Fire Fighters is a labor organization of over 11,000 firefighters, emergency medical providers and 911 communications officers across the Commonwealth of Virginia. Established in 1955, the VPFF represents 70 local affiliates of the International Association of Fire Fighters.