

General Information

Campaign name _____

Campaign email _____

Campaign website _____

Other social media _____

Campaign manager _____

Primary opponent (if applicable or known) _____

General opponent (if applicable or known) _____

Preferred method of contact _____

Contact information _____

Endorsements _____

Previous offices and dates held (if applicable) _____

Occupation _____

Arkansas Professional Fire Fighters

2018 Candidate Questionnaire

1. First Responder Mental Health

First responders frequently deal with traumatic situations in which we witness horrific scenes that are not easily dealt with. It can take an emotional, mental, and sometimes physical toll on even the strongest of us; often resulting in excessive amounts of stress on one's relationships and home life. Without the proper mechanisms in place to assist our members with finding and receiving the help they need, the outcomes can be costly- emotionally, monetarily, or worse. We are seeking to put in place a peer support network; the implementation of which, we believe, will be of great benefit to our members and our retirement system as it will provide them with a readily available resource to assist them with their injury and ultimately keep them healthy and employed. In order to do so, we will more than likely need the help and support of local leaders and state legislators. The IAFF offers peer support training to our members, but that training has to be augmented by other resources and cannot work without access to psychiatric help and proper funding. Would you be supportive of our efforts to establish this network? Why or why not?

2. Retirement Security

Firefighting is a dangerous and physically demanding job. Over the course of a nearly three decades long career of protecting life and property we are frequently exposed to dangerous environments that pose an immediate threat to our health and safety. In return, we ask for a secure retirement. Not being covered by Social Security, our pension system provides that secure future. Unfortunately, pension plans are often the subject of political attacks and schemes to seize what we have put into and built up through the course of our careers for the sake of profits and brokerage fees. These plots are often hatched in think tanks that have little interest in the financial well-being of any state or municipality and seek only to deceptively influence opinion and promote anti-pension sentiment. Despite the average yearly retirement allowance for an Arkansas firefighter being a meager \$18,000, we know we will soon face these attacks as we have already seen them in surrounding states and throughout the country. Under the guise of alleviating a nonexistent or exaggerated problem, these attempts often create massive unfunded liabilities by ceasing the funding needed to provide for current retirees and shifting it to defined contribution plans. This comes at great cost to the government, the taxpayer, and the retiree. We believe that a healthy system deserves to be protected and should be immune from any attempted cash-grabs, especially when sound practices and performance are demonstrated (ours is currently 76% funded). Would you support or oppose any efforts to alter or diminish our retirement security? Should an issue ever arise within our system, would you be willing to allow its stakeholders the first opportunity to propose a remedy? Why or why not?

3. Presumptive Cancer Disability

As with any disease, prevention is the first line of defense. There are many practices that can be implemented to help reduce exposures to cancer-causing carcinogens on a fire ground as well as at the fire station. Unfortunately, no matter what steps are taken to reduce contamination, completely eliminating risks is not a realistic goal. There will always be lives and property to protect and as a result, firefighters will continue to experience cancer rates greater than those of the general population. Because the practice of fighting fire occurs in an uncontrollable environment, there is no way to place occupational limits on exposures. It also seems highly unlikely that manufacturing practices will change to limit the use of cheap and hazardous materials, further reiterating the fact that exposure elimination is an unrealistic goal.

A recent study conducted by NIOSH found that firefighters stand a significantly increased risk of contracting and dying from certain types of cancer when compared to the general population, including a 100% increased risk for mesothelioma and a 45% increased risk for rectal cancer, among others. These findings are similar to the two other prominent comprehensive studies on the subject of cancer in the fire service. Given these realities, coupled with the fact that the state already recognizes cancer as an occupational hazard of the fire service for which we are eligible to receive a line of duty death benefit, we believe that members forced to retire because of cancers found to be linked to the fire service should be allowed to have a duty-related disability retirement. Would you be supportive of this effort? Why or Why not?

4. Residency

Firefighters serving many municipalities in the state choose to live outside of the city in which they work for a myriad of reasons. However, we are often faced with municipal governments imposing or attempting to impose restrictions on where we can choose to live. Their motives for doing so can be anything from padding public coffers to promoting a sense of civic pride. However, the former has been found to be unconstitutional and the latter has been found to be irrelevant. Little Rock, for example, was recently praised for attaining an ISO Class 1 rating and international accreditation with a workforce that is majority non-resident. In the words of administration, “this rating assures residents and businesses that they are receiving the best possible services from the Little Rock Fire Department.” Thus the assumption can be made that residency has no correlative effect on quality of service, with respect to those provided by a fire department.

We feel that this is a matter of individual liberty and imposing such restrictions, regardless of motive, violates the fundamental right of personal choice in family matters. Other states have passed laws banning this practice by municipalities and have been successful in upholding this ban under the strict scrutiny of state supreme court cases. We feel that if a municipality expresses an eagerness or even a willingness to violate the rights of its citizens or employees, then those people have no choice but to turn to the state to protect their rights. We also feel that preemptive efforts to curb this practice could save time and money by preventing needless litigation and wasting taxpayer dollars.

Would you support a ban on residency restrictions for firefighters? Why or why not?

5. Fill the Boot

The Muscular Dystrophy Association, or MDA, is leading the fight against muscular diseases such as muscular dystrophy and ALS. Since its partnership with the IAFF in 1954, firefighters have raised over \$400 million. However, in an effort to curb panhandling and solicitation on our cities' roadways, municipal governments have inadvertently hindered our ability to collect donations on behalf of this charity. Our larger cities generally raise more money, by virtue of having greater numbers and higher traffic volumes. Little Rock Local 34, a local that ordinarily raises anywhere from \$30k-\$50k a year for MDA, was only able to raise \$12k at its most recent Fill the Boot event. This is a direct result of a crackdown on panhandling and an emphasis on the enforcement of local ordinances that go as far as possible without violating civil liberties. We do not disagree with the importance of enforcing laws or cities doing what they can within the confines of the law to maintain safe and fluid rights-of-way. We only ask that an exception be granted in the case of firefighters collecting for Fill the Boot on behalf of MDA, as has already happened in other states. Collecting these funds often involves entering the roadway while traffic is stopped, causing little to no backup and always being mindful of the safety of one's self and the motorists also occupying the intersection. Without the freedom to step off of the curb and into the street, we will continue to see significantly lower returns on our efforts. While this only deprives us of our ability to collect in greater quantities, it deprives a worthy cause of the funds it so desperately needs to operate and continue to make breakthroughs in research. Would you support such an exception for firefighters so that our ability to collect is not dependent on the outcomes of legal challenges? Why or why not?

Thank you for taking the time to answer our questionnaire. Signed and answered questionnaires can be mailed or faxed to:

Arkansas Professional Fire Fighters

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Little Rock, AR 72201

FAX: (501)568-9181

Or emailed to mstallingsAPFF@yahoo.com

If you would like detailed explanations of the questions, supplemental information, or would like more information about our organization and who we represent, my number is (501)762-2873 or you can email me. Also feel free to provide us with any of your campaign literature, mailers, etc.