

EAST PROVIDENCE, RI – In an effort to enhance public safety and help local fire departments recruit and retain firefighters, U.S. Senators Jack Reed and Sheldon Whitehouse and Congressmen Seth Magaziner and Gabe Amo today joined with Providence Mayor Brett P. Smiley, East Providence Mayor Bob DaSilva, Chief Richard A. Susi (ret.) of the Rhode Island Association of Fire Chiefs (RIAFC), and local firefighters to announce \$22.05 million in federal funds for fire departments in Providence and East Providence and volunteer departments throughout the state.

The federal funds are being awarded through the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant program. These federal grants are designed to enhance local fire departments’ abilities to comply with response, equipment, and operational standards established by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA).

The **City of Providence** will receive a **\$16.9 million SAFER grant** to hire 44 new firefighters.

The \$16.9 million SAFER grant surpasses the \$15 million SAFER grant Providence received in 2015.

The **City of East Providence** will receive a **\$3.75 million SAFER grant** to hire 12 new firefighters.

The **Rhode Island Association of Fire Chiefs** will receive a **\$1.4 million SAFER grant** to support local volunteer fire departments across the state in recruiting and retaining volunteer firefighters.

“Increasing firefighter staffing levels helps increase public safety and expands emergency response capabilities. This is a smart investment that will support firefighter recruitment and retention and help communities add more firefighters to the ranks. I want to commend Mayor Smiley and Mayor DaSilva and their teams for putting together outstanding applications,” said **Senator Reed**, a senior member of the Appropriations Committee who leads an annual firefighter federal grant workshop each year. “I want to congratulate everyone involved for their efforts throughout this process. This is a win for our communities and for our firefighters, who put their lives on the line each day to protect and serve the public. I’ll continue working hard to deliver resources to ensure they have the equipment, technologies, recruiting, and highly-trained personnel they need.”

“Recruiting and training firefighters is a smart investment in public safety,” said **Senator Whitehouse**. “This federal funding will allow fire departments in Providence and East Providence, as well as volunteer fire departments throughout the state, to fill their ranks and better protect their communities.”

“When a fire or disaster strikes, Rhode Island’s firefighters stand ready to risk their lives for others, and the least we can do is ensure they have the resources they need to do their jobs safely,” said **Rep. Seth Magaziner**. “More firefighters means safer communities, and this federal funding will help recruit and retain firefighters to keep up with the demands of their essential work.”

“No fire department should have to wonder if they can recruit and retain enough brave men and women to answer the call,” said **Congressman Gabe Amo**. “Thanks to the robust federal funding being awarded this year to Providence, East Providence, and Rhode Island Association of Fire Chiefs, our communities will have the piece of mind of knowing that a highly-trained, well-equipped first responder will be there for them should they ever need to make that call.”

“Our firefighters are vital to the safety and well-being of our city, standing on the front lines every day to protect lives and keep our neighborhoods safe,” said **Mayor Brett P. Smiley**. “This historic funding will further support our ongoing recruitment efforts, elevating public safety in every neighborhood and improving the health and safety of our firefighters by reducing the strain of long hours. I want to thank our congressional delegation for their continuous leadership and advocacy to improve public safety in Providence and communities across Rhode Island.”

“Our administration is committed to providing the highest level of public safety services to our residents and visitors. We’ve invested in new technology, new firefighter safety equipment and new apparatus. This grant now allows us to invest in the greatest asset that any department has - our people. The SAFER grant will enable the city to increase our fire department personnel by 12 firefighters, which will help keep our community safe,” said **Mayor Bob DaSilva**. “Thank you to our congressional leaders for their continued success in supporting our public safety professionals.”

“This grant will allow the RIAFC Foundation to help the over 40 volunteer fire departments in RI attract, recruit and retain new volunteer firefighters by funding personal protective equipment, physicals and tuition assistance for more than 100 new volunteer firefighters. We will also be offering training opportunities and continuing with a highly visible marketing program to seek out people who are interested in helping their community in this way,” said **Chief Richard A. Susi (ret.), Executive Director of the Rhode Island Association of Fire Chiefs**.

SAFER grants fund the salaries and benefits of the additional firefighter positions for three years. The federal grants provide funding directly to fire departments and volunteer firefighter organizations to help them increase or maintain the number of trained, ‘front line’ firefighters available in their communities.

Members of the delegation helped secure \$324 million for the SAFER program in the fiscal year 2024 Appropriations law.

Last year, the East Providence Fire Department’s 111 firefighters handled over 13,700 calls and the Providence Fire Department’s 370-plus firefighters handled over 47,300 calls.

Over the last two years, Rhode Island fire departments and other first responders across the state have been awarded over \$30 million in federal funding through FEMA’s Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) and SAFER grant funding.

Prior to these awards, the Rhode Island Congressional delegation helped secure nearly \$7 million in federal AFG and SAFER grants for fire departments and first responders across the state.

