

House Panel Testimony- Brian Sokol

Members of the Panel, Distinguished Guest, and Fellow First Responders:

It is truly an honor and a privilege to stand in front of you today to testify on the importance of online fundraising for the volunteer fire departments in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Covid-19 has taken the PA Fire Departments on a different path of fundraising as compared to Pre-Covid-19 times. The path of travel is now online fundraising which has kept many volunteer fire departments financially stable. Online fundraising only has temporary approval from the state while Covid-19 is still considered active.

I stand here today seeking your support to permanently approve online fundraising sales. This will allow the firefighters to spend quality time with their families and to also assist all the fire departments financially.

Your traditional in-person fundraisers such as bingo requires 14 firefighters to work the bingo for approximately six hours per event and that does not include set up and cleanup, which is an additional two hours. Calculating these hours weekly is an overview of the hours the firefighters will be away from home. Compare these hours to the online sales, which require only two firefighters working from home with the same or even better financial results.

The Fire Department where I am a member is just one of many in the state of Pennsylvania that prides themselves with training, a requirement that the firefighter must have to answer alarms. The PA Entry Level Series consists of four modules totaling 140 hours of training. The Accelerated PA Entry Level Series requires 20 – 24 hours a week for twelve weeks to achieve the level of training needed. There is also Haz Mat Awareness – 8 hours, Haz Mat Operations- 24 hours, First Aid CPR- 8 hours and EVOT- 16 hours. These training modules are departmental options for all firefighters. The PA state requirement for firefighter training is HAZ Mat Awareness- 4 hours, or hazardous material operations refresher training- 6 hours. There is also scheduled training taught by our chief officers twice a month for a total of six hours per month which is mandatory by our department.

We at Rostraver Central Fire Dept average 750 calls per year which averages to two calls per day, at least one hour per call or much longer depending on the nature of the call. The amount of time the firefighter spends answering alarms is a significant amount of time spent away from their families along with maintaining full time employment.

The following is a detailed list of the cost to run a fire department.

Tower Ladder Truck	\$1,200,000.00
Engine Truck	550,000.00
Rescue Truck	550,000.00
Utility Truck	125,000.00
Maintenance per year	75,000.00

