



**Testimony of
Michael J. Crouse, 16th District Vice-President Emeritus
International Association of Fire Fighters**

LD 1105 An Act Concerning Displaced Civilian Federal Firefighters in Maine

Good morning, Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder and esteemed members of the Labor Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you this morning on the important legislation known as LD 1105, An Act Concerning Displaced Civilian Federal Firefighters in Maine which seeks to establish vital support mechanisms for displaced civilian federal firefighters across the State of Maine working at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, Naval Computers & Telecommunications Facility in Cutler and the Veteran Affairs Hospital in Togas.

My name is Michael J. Crouse, a resident of Kittery, Maine, and I have dedicated over 45 years of my life to advocating for the rights and working conditions of firefighters across North America. As the IAFF's 16th District Vice President, and now as Vice President Emeritus, I have represented the IAFF's federal firefighters throughout North America. Drawing from my extensive experience, particularly during the challenging times of the federal government's Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process, I stand in full support of LD 1105.

Throughout my career, I have witnessed firsthand the detrimental impact that federal base closures and consequent layoffs have on our brave civilian federal firefighters. In particular, the BRAC process, which impacted over 700 federal firefighters, along with the pending attacks on federal employees as of late has underscored the necessity for immediate intervention and support structures as we prepare for the potential of future layoffs, reductions in force actions, base realignments or even another round of base closures as DOD continues to look for ways to cut costs. The need for effective policy measures that facilitate the placement of these dedicated federal firefighters into vacant municipal roles cannot be overstated.

In light of these past experiences, LD 1105 represents a significant step forward in ensuring that displaced federal firefighters are not left without options or resources in the wake of their potential job losses. The planned establishment of a database to maintain a record of displaced qualified civilian federal firefighters is a groundbreaking initiative here in Maine. It echoes the concerns and struggles many have faced during the turbulence of layoffs, realignments and closures, providing a lifeline for those who have bravely served our communities and the nation.

The database will allow Maine to efficiently connect displaced federal firefighters with municipalities seeking to fill open (vacant) Fire/EMS positions. By prioritizing these dedicated civil servants, we acknowledge their years of service, specialized training, and commitment to public safety. These federal firefighters not only protect the Department of Defense (DOD), Department of the Navy (DON), and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) assets in the state, but they also work closely with municipal and volunteer fire departments outside of these facilities. Many of these firefighters also serve as volunteer and/or per diem Fire/EMS personnel. This measure not only empowers municipalities to make informed hiring decisions but also serves as a testament to our collective recognition of the sacrifices made by these federal firefighters during their service to our country.

Moreover, LD 1105's provision for giving priority consideration to displaced civilian federal firefighters for up to 48 months post-termination reflects a fair and just approach to employment support. In working with local fire chiefs to include these displaced firefighters in the hiring process, we are not just offering jobs; we are providing a pathway back into a profession that requires courage and skill, aligning with the firefighters' fight to serve their communities once again.

Equally important is the bill's focus on regionality, giving first consideration to displaced firefighters residing in the municipalities or counties where the jobs are located. This targeted approach ensures that we are not only retaining skilled fire service professionals locally but also that community's benefit from the expertise and dedication these individuals bring.

I cannot emphasize enough the responsibility we hold to care for those who protect us. Supporting LD 1105 is not just about legislation; it is about safeguarding a legacy of service, ensuring that the sacrifices made by federal firefighters are honored through meaningful opportunities in municipal fire departments. This bill is a forward-thinking solution that also stands as a pillar of our mutual commitment to public safety and the welfare of our firefighters and their families.

In conclusion, I respectfully urge all members of the committee to support that passage of LD 1105. Our civilian federal firefighters always have and will continue to stand ready to respond to emergencies on their respective facilities and to Maine communities under their respective Mutual-Aid agreements, and it is now our duty to respond to their needs should the federal government start abolishing the federal firefighter positions working in the State of Maine. Together, we can create a framework that not only addresses current challenges but also anticipates future opportunities. Thank you for your attention, and I look forward to our collective efforts in supporting this vital legislation.

Sincerely,

Michael

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