

**Summary of Testimony  
Provided for the  
Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee  
of the  
Senate of Pennsylvania**

**August 23, 2016**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony on the subject of challenges for Pennsylvania's Emergency Service Organizations.

As elected officials, you are the key to assuring effective public fire protection and emergency medical services to all of us in Pennsylvania.

You do so by providing responsible legislation and appropriations to allow the agencies of the Commonwealth to fulfill their obligations and to provide a mechanism for elected officials at the municipal and county level to support their local emergency service organizations.

A few years ago, I served as the subject matter expert and facilitator for the Adams County Council of Governments for their project titled *Financing Fire Services for Adams County, Pennsylvania*.

A copy of the report has been provided for your reference. I encourage you to read the report thoroughly and in its entirety, as it describes the plight of the fire departments in Adams County. While this report focuses on only one of the Commonwealth's sixty-seven counties, I believe the findings are common to almost all of them. Although this report is now three years old, many of the issues identified remain common to emergency service organizations throughout the Commonwealth.

As members of the State Legislature, it is incumbent upon you to enact the necessary legislation to allow the counties and local municipalities, including our cities, to expand their options to generate revenue for funding local emergency services and the necessary training to support their operations.

While much of the discussion of public fire protection focuses on operations, one must remember that the fundamental premise of fire protection is fire prevention.

Today, fire prevention activities are a component of a comprehensive Community Risk Reduction (CCR) program. Community Risk Reduction programs consist of the elements of Education, Engineering, Enforcement, Emergency Response, and Economic Impact.

As such, I recommend that the Legislature actively revisit the items identified by the Commission created by SR 60 of the Session of 2003, for the purpose evaluating the outstanding issues facing the emergency service organizations today.

Effective emergency services is a responsibility of more than the local fire departments and emergency medical service organizations. To be comprehensive, it must include the support of local elected officials.

Local emergency service items to be identified include the following:

- A strategic approach to Community Risk Reduction, including Education, Engineering, Enforcement, Emergency Response, and Economic Impact.
- Provision of reliable and sustainable sources of funding for emergency service organizations.
- Strategically located fire and emergency medical stations equipped with modern and reliable apparatus and equipment.
- Well trained and properly equipped individuals to effectively perform all tasks associated with the operation and administration of the emergency services organization.
- Investigation of expanding the role of emergency medical service organizations as pre-hospital medical service providers thru such programs as community paramedicine.

These key points are only a sampling of the challenges facing Pennsylvania's firefighters today. I encourage you to share this information with your colleagues at the state and local level to further identify and resolve these issues.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

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# **JOHN S. SENFT**

Chief John S. Senft retired as Chief of the Department of Fire/Rescue Services of the City of York, Pennsylvania.

Chief Senft became a volunteer firefighter in 1970 and entered career service in 1973. He progressed thru the ranks to his position as Chief of Department which he held from 2000 until his retirement in 2010. He remains active in emergency services as a volunteer, primarily in an administrative and support capacity.

Chief Senft is a graduate of the National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Officer program. He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Organizational Management and a Master of Science in Management from Eastern University in St. Davids, Pennsylvania.

He is a member of many professional organizations and is an active emergency services instructor. He is an adjunct faculty member of the National Fire Academy where he has served as an instructor and subject matter expert for several programs. He teaches emergency service classes throughout Pennsylvania.

In addition to teaching, Chief Senft provides consulting services to a variety of emergency service organizations, public safety agencies, and municipal governments.