

Eliminate Fire Grants

SAVINGS IN MILLIONS OF DOLLARS

2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2016-2020	2016-2025
\$591	\$603	\$617	\$631	\$645	\$659	\$675	\$692	\$709	\$725	\$3,087	\$6,547

Heritage Recommendation:

Eliminate the fire grant program administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). This proposal saves \$591 million in 2016, and \$6.5 billion over 10 years.

Rationale:

Fire grants encompass a number of programs. The Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) program subsidizes the routine activities of local fire departments and emergency management organizations. The Fire Prevention and Safety (FP&S) grants fund projects to improve the safety of firefighters and protect the public from fire and related hazards, while the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grants are intended to increase staffing levels by funding the salaries of career firefighters and paying for recruitment activities for volunteer fire departments.

The Heritage Foundation's Center for Data Analysis evaluated the effectiveness of fire grants by matching fire grant award data to the National Fire Incident Reporting System, an incident-based database of fire-related emergencies reported by fire departments. Using panel data from 1999 to 2006 for more than 10,000 fire departments, the evaluation assessed the impact of fire grants on four different measures of fire casualties: (1) firefighter deaths, (2) firefighter injuries, (3) civilian deaths, and (4) civilian injuries.

The Heritage Foundation evaluation compared fire departments that received grants to fire departments that did not receive grants. In addition, the evaluation compared the impact of the grants before and after grant-funded fire departments received federal assistance.

Fire grants appear to be ineffective at reducing fire casualties. AFG, FP&S, and SAFER grants failed to reduce firefighter deaths, firefighter injuries, civilian deaths, or civilian injuries. Without receiving fire grants, comparison fire departments were just as successful at preventing fire casualties as grant-funded fire departments.

Additional Reading:

- David B. Muhlhausen, "Do DHS Fire Grants Reduce Fire Casualties" Heritage Foundation *Center for Data Analysis Report* No. 09-05, September 23, 2009, <http://www.Heritage.org/research/reports/2009/09/do-dhs-fire-grants-reduce-fire-casualties>.
- David B. Muhlhausen, "Fire Grants: Do Not Reauthorize an Ineffective Program," Heritage Foundation *Issue Brief* No. 3788, November 29, 2012, <http://www.Heritage.org/research/reports/2012/11/fire-grants-do-not-reauthorize-femas-ineffective-program>.

Calculations:

Savings are expressed as budget authority, as reported on page 179 of "Analytical Perspectives, Budget of the United States Government, Fiscal Year 2015, Table 29-1. Federal Programs by Agency and Account," http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/budget/fy2015/assets/29_1.pdf. Fire grant outlays are included in FEMA Total State and Local Programs and are assumed, based on FY 2013 funding levels, to represent 26 percent of the total state and local program costs. Budget authority is not provided for 2025, but is assumed to increase at the same rate as the geometric mean of the previous nine years.