



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS®

EDWARD A. KELLY
General President

FRANK V. LÍMA
General Secretary-Treasurer

April 27, 2022

Richmond City Council
Richmond City Hall
900 E. Broad Street, Suite 305
Richmond, Virginia 23219

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PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE

Dear Council President Newbille, Vice President Robertson, and Honorable Members of Richmond City Council:

I write to you on behalf of the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) in full support of the Richmond Professional Fire Fighters Association, IAFF Local 995 and Richmond City Council [Ordinance 2021-345](#). If enacted, Ordinance 2021-345 would provide for collective bargaining for certain City employees, including firefighters and other first responders.

In today's public safety environment, fire departments operate as all-hazards response agencies and are often the first point of contact that our citizens, visitors, and community organizations have with representatives of City government. As such, it has become increasingly important that firefighters have a greater voice when it comes to firefighter safety, staffing, wages, and benefits.

Our fundamental goals have remained consistent throughout the IAFF's 104-year history, which are to address major issues including benefits, safety and health, training, and political action. The IAFF enjoys our partnerships with our elected officials and work to educate politicians about issues important about firefighters and emergency medical personnel such as safe staffing, first responder training and collective bargaining. IAFF members also work to elect candidates who support our cause, regardless of party affiliation.

At the state level, IAFF Local 995 belongs to the Virginia Professional Firefighters Association (VPPF). As you are probably aware, we have worked in partnership with the VPPF to pass signature legislation such as the Heart and Lung Bill to help public safety workers ease the problem of proving that their heart, lung, or occupational cancer is linked to their profession. In addition, with an increase in firefighter suicide and post-traumatic stress illness, we have worked to enact legislation requiring mental health training for every department in the state. However, our work on these important issues is still not complete. Collective bargaining in Richmond will only help to enhance these important protections for our hometown heroes.

Since 1838, thirty-nine (39) members of the Richmond Fire Department have made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty. We must never forget the dangers of our profession and work collaboratively to find ways to recognize our employees and reduce risk wherever possible. The International Association of Fire Fighters respectfully requests your support with passing Ordinance 2021-345.

Richmond Professional Firefighters Association, Local 995 looks forward to having a seat at the table, not as an afterthought in years past, but as an employee group that has equal footing with city

administrators for a better tomorrow for our members. Your favorable consideration is appreciated. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or if I may be of assistance to you or your constituents.

Respectfully,



Andrew K. Pantelis

District Vice President

International Association of Fire Fighters, 4th District

Representing Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Delaware, West Virginia, & Washington, D.C.

cc: Edward A. Kelly, General President, International Association of Fire Fighters
Robert L. Bragg, III, President, Virginia Professional Fire Fighters
Keith Andes, President, Richmond Professional Fire Fighters Association, IAFF Local 995

The International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) was founded in 1918 for the purposes of giving firefighters a democratic voice in their workplace. At a time when workers had little rights, the IAFF became the firefighters voice and remains so today. At present, the IAFF has over 326,000 full time professional firefighters and medical personnel in the United States and Canada.

Virginia Professional Fire Fighters
I.A.F.F. ~ AFL-CIO-CLC

18 North 8th Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Robert L. Bragg, III
President



Paul J. Hebert
Secretary/Treasurer

May 1, 2022

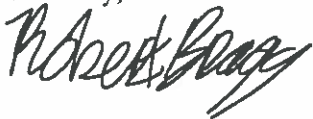
Dear Richmond City Council,

On behalf of the Richmond Fire Fighter Association – Local 995, I ask you to vote Ordinance Number 2021-345 and support the City's firefighters and their families. We all agree that our citizens deserve the best schools, the safest communities, and the strongest emergency services. In order to achieve that, our local leaders must actively seek input and foster collaboration with their employees.

The risk to fire fighters has never been greater than it is today. They are working in uncontrolled and often unprotected environments. When most people are running away from danger, these brave men and women are running towards the flames to save the life of a stranger. Despite difficult situations, the dedication and professionalism of Richmond's fire fighters never wavered throughout the coronavirus pandemic. Accolades and awards for the work is not what motivates them. They are simply doing what must be done. In return, we must thank these individuals for their bravery with enhanced safety protections, better wages, and dependable retirement benefits. City leaders must acknowledge the crucial role these public employees play and give them a voice on how to enhance public safety for the citizens they swore to protect. Fire fighters know what fire fighters need. They should be able to negotiate and have a seat at the table during decisions on equipment purchases, safety procedures and fire station upgrades.

Since the General Assembly repealed the prohibition of collective bargaining in 2020, the Virginia Professional Fire Fighters has been working with local elected officials across Virginia to ensure our fire fighters have a seat at the table when decisions are made impacting their health and safety. Fire fighters willingly respond to the needs of Virginia's citizens every day. We are asking for them to be given the same opportunity to advocate for their needs. Ordinance Number 2021-345 would give City fire fighters the freedom to collectively bargain, and I am calling on the members of Richmond's City Council to vote for it. Our fire fighters are simply asking to be given an ongoing invitation to develop shared objectives. Without such an avenue to advocate their concerns, workers are forced to resort to other less constructive avenues to resolve safety deficiencies.

Sincerely,



Robert Bragg
President

Virginia Professional Fire Fighters