



Pennsylvania
**Office of the State
Fire Commissioner**

OSFC Tailboard Topic: **Volunteer Tax Credit Program**

Recruitment and Retention Program

January 17, 2025



OSFC Tailboard Topic

Volunteer Tax Credit Program

Overview:

To enable counties, municipalities, and school districts the option to provide tax incentives to fire and Emergency Medical Services ("EMS") volunteers, the Volunteer Tax Credit Program was established by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Before engaging with local government entities and school districts, fire and EMS representatives should consider the following discussion points:

- **Introduction and Act 91 Outreach:**
 - Reach out in advance to introduce yourself and be prepared to provide a copy of Act 172 of 2016 and Act 91 of 2020.
 - Explain the Volunteer Tax Credit Program and its goal to support volunteer fire and EMS personnel.
 - *During meetings, people are too busy to absorb all public comments, so early engagement is crucial.*
- **Representation and Visibility:**
 - Ensure each affected department has a representative at meetings (not necessarily a Chief).
 - *A visible presence with staff in uniforms adds credibility and shows unity.*
- **Engagement and Follow-Up:**
 - Attend entire meetings to maintain visibility; board members may approach you afterward with questions.
 - Follow up with a thank-you email, answering any lingering questions.
- **Budget Realities:**
 - Discuss how maintaining a strong volunteer department benefits the community through faster response times and reduced costs.
 - Communicate that added costs for paid staff are ultimately passed to residents, affecting everyone in the community.
 - *Be prepared for the long haul; changes may not appear in the next budget cycle.*
- **Building a Foundation:**
 - Stress the need for counties, municipalities, and school districts to support and incentivize volunteers.
 - Don't expect quick results—focus on establishing the program and getting a foothold.
 - *Attending regular meetings shows commitment. Consistency in presence and engagement is key.*
- **The Long-Term Approach:**
 - Advocate for consistent funding and recognition to ensure the future viability of volunteer services.
 - *Changing the system will take time—don't expect immediate fixes. It took decades to get to this point.*



- **Be Transparent about Failures:**
 - Be open about challenges; sharing tough realities, like missed calls, makes a stronger case for needed support.
 - *Showing vulnerability can motivate others to help.*
- **Program Success and Results:**
 - Don't underestimate the power of sharing success stories. Highlight progress (e.g., 120 credits/rebates in 2024 totaling \$73,708.43 or 8 new members became eligible this year).
 - Show program effectiveness.
- **Personal Commitment and Engagement:**
 - Regularly attend municipal meetings to stay engaged, even if you have no immediate comments.
 - *Share successes to justify continued support, reinforcing the need for ongoing participation.*

These points will help in ensuring a clear, concise, and focused message when speaking about the Volunteer Tax Credit Program's success and needs.

