

Arkansas Professional Fire Fighters 2020 Candidate Questionnaire



General Information

Primary opponent (if applicable or known)

General opponent (if applicable or known)

Preferred method of contact _____

Contact information _____

Endorsements _____

Previous offices and dates held (if applicable)

Occupation _____

Campaign email _____

Campaign website _____

Other social media _____

Campaign manager _____

General Information (continued)

Hobbies and other interests

Social organizations

Reading interests

**Any other information you wish to share about you
or your campaign**

1. First Responder Mental Health

First responders frequently deal with traumatic situations in which we witness horrific scenes that are not easily dealt with. It can take an emotional, mental, and sometimes physical toll on even the strongest of us; often resulting in excessive amounts of stress on one's relationships and home life. Without the proper mechanisms in place to assist our members with finding and receiving the help they need, the outcomes can be costly- emotionally, monetarily, or worse. We are seeking to put in place a peer support network; the implementation of which, we believe, will be of great benefit to our members and our retirement system as it will provide them with a readily available resource to assist them with their injury and ultimately keep them healthy and employed. In order to do so, we will more than likely need the help and support of local leaders and state legislators. The IAFF offers peer support training to our members, but that training has to be augmented by other resources and cannot work without access to psychiatric help and proper funding. Would you be supportive of our efforts to establish this network? Would you be supportive of requiring insurers to cover access to mental health facilities that specialize in first responder mental health? Why or why not?

2. Retirement Security

Firefighting is a dangerous and physically demanding job. Over the course of a nearly three decades long career of protecting life and property we are frequently exposed to dangerous environments that pose an immediate threat to our health and safety. In return, we ask for a secure retirement. Not being covered by Social Security, our pension system provides that secure future. Unfortunately, pension plans are often the subject of political attacks and schemes to seize what we have put into and built up through the course of our careers for the sake of profits and brokerage fees. These plots are often hatched in think tanks that have little interest in the financial well-being of any state or municipality and seek only to deceptively influence opinion and promote anti-pension sentiment. Despite the average yearly retirement allowance for an Arkansas firefighter being a meager \$18,000, we know we will soon face these attacks as we have already seen them in surrounding states and throughout the country. Under the guise of alleviating a nonexistent or exaggerated problem, these attempts often create massive unfunded liabilities by ceasing the funding needed to provide for current retirees and shifting it to defined contribution plans. This comes at great cost to the government, the taxpayer, and the retiree. We believe that a healthy system deserves to be protected and should be immune from any attempted cash-grabs, especially when sound practices and performance are demonstrated (ours is currently 76% funded). Would you support or oppose any efforts to alter or diminish our retirement security? Should an issue ever arise within our system, would you be willing to allow its stakeholders the first opportunity to propose a remedy? Why or why not?

3. Presumptive Cancer Disability

As with any disease, prevention is the first line of defense. There are many practices that can be implemented to help reduce exposures to cancer-causing carcinogens on a fire ground as well as at the fire station.

Unfortunately, no matter what steps are taken to reduce contamination, completely eliminating risks is not a realistic goal. There will always be lives and property to protect and as a result, firefighters will continue to experience cancer rates greater than those of the general population.

Because the practice of fighting fire occurs in an uncontrollable environment, there is no way to place occupational limits on exposures. It also seems highly unlikely that manufacturing practices will change to limit the use of cheap and hazardous materials, further reiterating the fact that exposure elimination is an unrealistic goal.

A recent study conducted by NIOSH found that firefighters stand a significantly increased risk of contracting and dying from certain types of cancer when compared to the general population, including a 100% increased risk for mesothelioma and a 45% increased risk for rectal cancer, among others. These findings are similar to the two other prominent comprehensive studies on the subject of cancer in the fire service. As such, the APFF has worked with the legislature and fought hard to establish a line of duty death benefit, line of duty disability, a relief fund to help alleviate the cost of fighting cancer, and extended leave for firefighters with certain cancers. Currently, the relief fund is based solely on charitable

donations, so would you support an effort to find a steady source of funding for the Arkansas Fire Fighter Cancer Relief Fund?

4. Residency

Firefighters serving many municipalities in the state choose to live outside of the city in which they work for a myriad of reasons. However, we are often faced with municipal governments imposing or attempting to impose restrictions on where we can choose to live. Their motives for doing so can be anything from padding public coffers to promoting a sense of civic pride. However, the former has been found to be unconstitutional and the latter has been found to be irrelevant. Little Rock, for example, was recently praised for attaining an ISO Class 1 rating and international accreditation with a workforce that is majority non-resident. In the words of administration, “this rating assures residents and businesses that they are receiving the best possible services from the Little Rock Fire Department.” Thus the assumption can be made that residency has no correlative effect on quality of service, with respect to those provided by a fire department.

We feel that this is a matter of individual liberty and imposing such restrictions, regardless of motive, violates the fundamental right of personal choice in family matters. Other states have passed laws banning this practice by municipalities and have been successful in upholding this ban under the strict scrutiny of state supreme court cases. We feel that if a

its most recent Fill the Boot event. This is a direct result of a crackdown on panhandling and an emphasis on the enforcement of local ordinances that go as far as possible without violating civil liberties. We do not disagree with the importance of enforcing laws or cities doing what they can within the confines of the law to maintain safe and fluid rights-of-way. We only ask that an exception be granted in the case of firefighters collecting for Fill the Boot on behalf of MDA, as has already happened in other states. Collecting these funds often involves entering the roadway while traffic is stopped, causing little to no backup and always being mindful of the safety of one's self and the motorists also occupying the intersection. Without the freedom to step off of the curb and into the street, we will continue to see significantly lower returns on our efforts. While this only deprives us of our ability to collect in greater quantities, it deprives a worthy cause of the funds it so desperately needs to operate and continue to make breakthroughs in research. Would you support such an exception for firefighters so that our ability to collect is not dependent on the outcomes of legal challenges? Why or why not?

6. Firefighter Bill of Rights

With any disciplinary action taken in an Arkansas workplace covered under civil service laws, there are potentially four parties involved: the employee, management, the Civil Service Commission, and in some cases the circuit court system. Should a disputed case go so far as to reach the

court system, it can come at an extremely high price for the employee as well as the city that employs them. Therefore, we feel it benefits every party involved to operate with the same set of rules and we only ask that these rules be promulgated, provided to the employee, and enforced fairly. If a simple test that determines whether actions taken by an employer are fair was codified, we could avoid needless lawsuits and costly settlements- something that recently cost the city of Jacksonville nearly \$300,000. Having protections in place for the employee and employer in the form of a Firefighter Bill of Rights will help avoid outcomes like that. Would you support this idea? Why or why not?

7. Collective Bargaining

Collective bargaining is the best way we can adequately provide the benefits, safety, and job security that make this a more attractive profession. This is good for the men and women next to us on the fireground, but it is also a great benefit for the communities in which we serve because we can attract the best candidates. Despite that, very few administrations are willing to bargain with their work force. Do you support collective bargaining for public employees? Why or why not?

Candidate Signature

Thank you for taking the time to answer our questionnaire. Signed and answered questionnaires can be mailed or faxed to:

Arkansas Professional Fire Fighters

210 S. Gaines St.

Little Rock, AR 72201

FAX: (501)568-9181

Or emailed to wademarshall@me.com

Or returned to your local president

If you would like detailed explanations of the questions, supplemental information, or would like more information about our organization and who we represent, please reach out to APFF President Wade Marshall at wademarshall@me.com or at 501-317-0135.

Also feel free to provide us with any of your campaign literature, mailers, etc.