



# **NEW YORK STATE PROFESSIONAL FIRE FIGHTERS ASSOCIATION**

Michael McManus - President

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## **NYS PFFA**

### **2014 ORGANIZATIONAL LEGISLATIVE & REGULATORY**

### **THREE YEAR PLAN**

**Date: 10/22/13**

## **Overview**

As you are aware, the New York State Professional Fire Fighters Association (NYSPFFA) represents 18,000 men and women working full-time as members of professional fire departments across the State. NYSPFFA advocates on behalf of members who serve in 105 local unions, 41 counties and in the boroughs of New York City.

NYSPFFA represents the common interests of professional firefighters in New York, and works to secure your just compensation for services; equitable settlement of your grievances; reasonable working conditions and to place your services on a higher plane of skill and efficiency than traditional non-uniform public employees.

NYSPFFA leads in the creation of instruction and training programs that help improve methods of firefighting and prevention, including workplace health and safety; labor relations; member education and training; community engagement; multi-level communications; best practices and more.


## **Introduction**

We offer this document as the framework of our future goals and how to achieve them. However, it must be realized that much like a fire pre-plan, this cannot be cast in stone. We must be able to adapt our plan to changes in politics, unforeseen attacks and emerging technologies in order to achieve our objectives.

Our future success will depend on effective communication, legislation, education, service to Locals and, of course, your participation.

## **Communication Tools**

The NYSPFFA will continue to improve communication to our affiliates throughout New York State:

- The implementation of an enhanced interactive Website ([www.nyspffa.org](http://www.nyspffa.org)) which provides:
  - News Releases
  - Calendar of NYSPFFA Events, Registration & Deadlines
  - Local Spotlights
  - Alerts
  - NYSPFFA Legislative Agenda
  - Video Messaging
  - Legislative Updates
  - NYSPFFA Legislative Memoranda
  -  Twitter: @nyspffa
  - Members only Access
  - Benefit Information
  - Staff Contacts

Since the updated website went live, we have been continually updating and adding useful information for all Locals to ensure that no matter where you live or when on duty you have access to a pipeline of information. Over the next three years we intend to significantly increase the information provided through the website including:

- Addition of a “Best Practices” section to the Member Only page of the website which will be populated with helpful “How to Documents” including:
  - Collective Bargaining Tips
  - How to run a successful PR Campaign
  - Retirement Disability Forms and Step-by-Step Filing Guide
  - A guide to GML 207a including forms, draft policies, and an overview of how to challenge a municipal denial
  - A Step-by-Step Guide to PERB Proceedings
  - Detailed analyses of any new laws of interest, and

- We also intend to add an “Important Events” section to the website to provide all members with updates of NYSPFFA activities in- and outside of Albany which will include:
  - Legislative Member Meetings
  - Committee Meetings
  - NYSPFFA Media Coverage
  - NYSPFFA Assistance to Individual Locals
  - District Meetings; and
  - Other significant items of interest
- Once initially populated, we will also be placing a request form in this section for any individual Local to submit to the NYSPFFA seeking analysis on any issue of Local interest.

*The Siren*

- The introduction and dissemination of The “SIREN” which is sent to all Local Presidents and is posted on the NYSPFFA website for all members. The SIREN includes:
  - Legislative Updates
  - Recent Legal Decisions of Interest
  - Updates on NYSPFFA and Local Events, and
  - News from the Capitol

Over the next three years, we will be implementing additions to The SIREN including:

- Recap of NYSPFFA Legislative activities
- Weekly Recap of NYSPFFA Legal activities
- A Local Spotlight
- Bill Specific Status Updates, and
- Firefighter National News

Further, starting January 2014, a new issue of The SIREN will be issued on a bi-weekly basis during the Legislative Session and on a monthly basis off session.

*\*NEW\* Union Member Open Forum*

In an effort to increase communication with each and every Local and its members, the NYSPFFA will be implementing a new bi-weekly Union Member Open Forum during the Legislative Session and on a monthly basis off session whereby Local representatives and individual members can participate on a conference call with NYSPFFA leadership as well as Hinman Straub P.C. The Forum will be for open discussion and any Local representative or individual member can call in and:

- Request Updates
- Ask Questions
- Make suggestions
- Air Grievances
- Ask for Statewide Local Support; or
- Just find out what is going on

We intend to hold the first Forum prior to the beginning of the January 2014 Legislative Session. Details will be posted on the Members Only portion of the website in mid to late November.

*\*NEW\* NYSPFFA Annual Recap*

The NYSPFFA will be implementing annual reports to Locals. The annual report will provide an in-depth analysis of NYSPFFA activities during the past legislative session as well as updates on new and existing NYSPFFA services to Locals.

*\*NEW\* 2013-14 Local Analysis*

The NYSPFFA will be distributing what will be annual “Local Analysis” seeking specific information in relation to what is included on our Legislative Agenda and how each Local ranks any specific proposal’s priority.

The Local Analysis will provide each Local with the ability to submit items to the NYSPFFA for inclusion on the Legislative Agenda. In addition, we will also use the pedigree information and create a statewide chart for posting in the Members Only section of our website. The Local Analysis covers the following areas:

- Local Background (i.e. President, contact info, CBA expiration date...)
- Geographical Background
- Training/Staffing
- Ambulance Service
- Local Issues
- Legislative Initiatives

An additional purpose of this document is to update the Locals' information, to seek details regarding the municipality's financial situation, local issues, performance of local legislators and your individual legislative priorities. This document will also gather information regarding your opinion of our services and ideas on how we can better meet your needs.

## **Legislation**

### *Elevation of NYSPFFA Identity, Profile and Influence*

In collaboration with our strategic communications firm, Corning Place Communications - [www.corningplace.com](http://www.corningplace.com) (CPC) - we will continue to elevate the NYSPFFA profile through active media engagements, as well as strategically placed news releases, opinion pieces and columns, broadcast interviews and social media engagement. CPC's work on behalf of the NYSPFFA, and in particular their political strategies and approach has been judged by communications experts as among the most effective in the State.

Over the next three years, we hope to significantly expand on the progress we made over the last two years to ensure that the entire Legislature knows that ignoring, opposing or attacking our legislative issues will result in significant public reprisal.

### Legislative and Legal Services

In 2014, we intend to continue working with the law firm (Hinman Straub, P.C.) which will assist us with legal and legislative agenda in Albany.

([www.hinmanstraub.com](http://www.hinmanstraub.com))

The NYSPFFA will work with all other labor unions (AFL-CIO, PEC, Law Enforcement agencies) to protect the well deserved benefits that you have earned (Triborough, Pension and Healthcare issues ).

Moreover, on a case-by-case basis we will increase issue specific events as requested or required including:

- Special Legislative Lobby Days
- Public Rallies (Albany and Local)
- Media Days
- Local Coverage of Important Issues

### Legislative Candidates

Last year, the NYSPFFA implemented a Statewide Candidate Questionnaire, which was sent to all Locals to vet potential Legislative Candidates on issues of importance to Firefighters across the State.

As a result of the positive feedback received as to the effectiveness of the Statewide Candidate Questionnaire, each election season the NYSPFFA will distribute an updated Statewide Candidate Questionnaire for Local use. Moreover, upon request, the NYSPFFA will work with Locals to add a Local-specific page to the survey to cover any Local laws of concern.

**Feedback from every local is critical to identify both the legislators that have our best interests in mind and those that do not.**

Our state office will continue making every effort to stay ahead of the curve in identifying any future issues and concerns. All resources will be used to make our voice loud and clear in pro-actively educating the legislature and the public.

## **Education**

The NYSPFFA will continue to offer cutting edge training programs for all members, as well as other important events including:

- NYSPFFA Annual Convention
- NYSPFFA Legislative Conference
- Cornell Conference
- NYSPFFA Health and Safety Conference
- Retirement Seminars
- Training Sessions for New Union Officers.

Over the next three years we will keep you updated on new legislation, changes in the retirement system, and laws and procedures dealing with PERB. We will post information on CBAs, policies, negotiations, skills and tactics, and PR information. We will also continue evaluating the need to add any other events. Local comments and suggestions are welcomed.

## **Services to Locals**

- Increased assistance on various Local specific issues including:
  - We will continue providing Amicus Briefs and other assistance for all Locals, whether fighting lay-offs, contract violations or working to obtain a CON to run an ambulance service
  - Engagement and access to the award-winning communications specialists at Corning Place Communications to increase the NYSPFFA's profile, as well as provide assistance to individual Locals in mounting local political strategies and campaigns to counter attacks on Local departments.
- Continued efforts to combat the Conference of Mayors, Association of Towns, the Governor, and any other adversarial group that attacks organized labor.

- Implementation of an annual Legislative Score Card on selected issues in order to target legislators who continue to oppose and/or threaten our agenda.

### Local Assistance with Grass Roots Lobbying

Over the next three years we intend to increase our backing of individual Local issues as well as provide increased support in the following ways:

- Providing continued availability of Corning Place Communications to assist member Locals in conjunction with the NYSPFFA when the need arises to combat member downsizing, firehouse closures or any other emergent matter requiring immediate Local contact with the media.
- On behalf of Locals we will continue to orchestrate coordinated efforts to show statewide support for any Local-specific legislation. This relatively new but effective service includes the provision of stock letters to the Governor and Legislators for submission by all Locals. We will also increase communication with regard to any and all Local issues providing any information necessary to facilitate productive meetings in your Legislator's home office.
- The NYSPFFA will continue to increase the involvement of our legal and lobbying team in daily inquiries from member Locals on matters including but not limited to:
  - Collective Bargaining
  - Retirement Disability
  - GML 207a
  - Municipal Ambulance
  - 2% Money
  - Local Laws
  - Legislation
  - Employer Police and Fire Contribution Rates

- The NYSPFFA intends to continue its close working relationship with the IAFF, and continue to utilize their resources to provide additional support and funding to all our locals.

Regardless of our current and future issues, involvement from all members is essential. Whether we hold rallies or ask for help gathering data, our continued success depends on our unity. We hope that everyone will be there to participate and answer the call.

If you have any questions, suggestions or concerns please contact your Executive Board.

Fraternally,

Your NYSPFFA Executive Board