

# **Durbin Meets With Association of Illinois Firefighters**

March 10 2020 4:56 PM



WASHINGTON – U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) today met with members of the Association of Illinois Firefighters to discuss legislation to support fire departments,

firefighters, and paramedics in Illinois. Durbin discussed his support for the Assistance for Firefighters grant program and SAFER grant program that provide critical resources, training, and equipment to fire departments across Illinois.

Before his meeting with members of the Illinois Association of Firefighters, Durbin spoke to the International Association of Firefighters (IAFF) conference in Washington, D.C., and thanked them for everything they do to keep Americans safe. Durbin pledged to continue supporting firefighters through federal grant programs and legislation that improves firefighter health care and expands firefighter mental health care access.

**“Being a first responder takes more courage and skill than most people can imagine, and it takes a huge toll on the first responders themselves and their families,”** Durbin said. **“We can make this inherently dangerous profession safer by making sure fire departments have the best training, equipment, and access to health care.”**

**A photo of today’s meeting is available [here](#).**

Durbin is a cosponsor of the HERO Act, which would require the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to collect data on first responder suicides, and to identify interventions and areas for further study. It also would establish grants for peer-to-peer counseling for firefighters and to develop best practices to treat and prevent PTSD among first responders.

Durbin is also a cosponsor of the Public Safety Employer-Employee Cooperation Act, which would ensure that all firefighters, police officers, and EMS have the ability to form and join a labor union and engage in collective bargaining. Additionally, he is a cosponsor of the Firefighters Fairness Act, which would provide worker’s compensation to federal firefighters.

Durbin cosponsored the bill to establish the Center for Disease Control and Prevention’s Firefighter Cancer Registry, which became law in 2018. In March 2019, Durbin and Senator Susan Collins (R-ME) wrote to National Institutes of Health and Department of Defense urging them to research low-cost ways to reduce firefighters’ exposure to carcinogens.

The SIREN Act, introduced by Durbin and Senator Pat Roberts (R-KS), was enacted as part of the 2018 Farm Bill. It authorized a new grant program at HHS to support rural fire and EMS agencies. The Fiscal Year 2020 Omnibus provided \$5 million for the program.

