

Good Morning, My Name is John Hejl and I am the fire chief in Casselton ND.

Casselton Fire is 100% volunteer. This fire department provides fire protection for the cities of Casselton and Amenia as well as 12 townships in the surrounding area. This primary fire coverage area is 385 square miles and covers just over 4,500 North Dakotans. Not every fire department in North Dakota provides extrication; many of our neighboring departments do not. We are dispatched out automatically if extrication is needed for a number of our neighboring departments bringing our total extrication zone up to 745 square miles. The Insurance Services Organization has given us an ISO score of 4 putting us in the top 1% of fire departments in North Dakota when it comes to preparedness and proven efficiency.

Volunteer and Career departments across the state pull funding from a variety of sources; grants, taxes, general funds of cities and townships, and all too often donations and fundraisers. Those funding sources should mirror their uses. Career or volunteer, metro or rural you will be hard pressed to find two identical departments. At Casselton Fire roughly 1/3 of our call volume comes from Casselton, 1/3 from our rural addresses, and 1/3 from Interstate 94 of which we cover 33 Miles; from Mapleton to Tower City. The Interstate and the State Highways that run through our area make us focus on extrication and dealing with hazardous situations and substances that would otherwise not be an issue in our area. Our local residents pay property tax and an insurance rider to fund the safety net we provide. We receive no additional funding for covering these highway systems.

Any piece of legislation should ask the question: "What problems does it aim to fix?"

Emergency response whether it be medical, law, or fire should not be taxed on the fuel used to carry responders and their equipment to an emergency to help people. As volunteer responders in Casselton we are not asking for a fuel tax exemption for a pay increase, but rather to provide current/safe tools, apparatus, and PPE for our firefighters. The dollar amount generated from this is not a huge mountain but rather a small step to increase our funding level. This "pot" of funding that we pull from needs to be as big as possible to keep an ever aging fleet of trucks, tools, and Gear current in order to keep my personnel and the citizens we are charged with protecting, safe.

Please help the fire service in our great state so that we can better serve our citizens.

Thank You

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