

Legislative Committee 2011 – Nyle Zikmund

This past year the MSFCA Legislative Committee experienced a roller coaster ride of failures and successes at the Legislature, primarily as it relates to the Fire Safety Account (FSA). We began on a low note when the Governor's original budget came out and all FSA monies were transferred to the general fund for other use. However, shortly after and largely due to efforts by the Minnesota Professional Firefighters all money was restored; a historic first!

As we migrated thru the session we continued the ride with House Public Safety Chair Tony Cornish giving us an entire committee hearing dedicated to the FSA while the Senate did not give us any time. That euphoria lasted only a short time though as the House bill took all the money while the Senate left \$2 million; go figure!

As the bill moved to conference we were hoping to salvage the Senate position but to no avail as the House language prevailed and thus, all money was taken. But then the Governor vetoed all but the Agricultural budget bill so everything was back in play.

We received word the morning of the Special Session that \$4.7 million of the unallocated \$8.5 million would be allocated to the Fire Safety Account. Next to the Governor's adjusted budget, this was historic in the amount finally allocated to the FSA as the original legislative intended.

However and unfortunately we once again came down from this high when it was discovered that no appropriation language was included in the special session agreement. While there was verbal agreement as part of the global solution, absent the actual appropriation language the money cannot be transferred from the special revenue fund to the FSA.

So, we started on a low note and have ended on a low note. But, we are well positioned and will resolve to have the \$4.7 million agreed to in the Special Session appropriated to the FSA once the legislature convenes January 24, 2012.

Despite the roller coaster ride on the FSA, we did accomplish two other important goals last session; passage of the donated equipment bill which had been on the docket for four years. You can now donate any used public safety equipment to another department in Minnesota and be immune from liability absent gross negligence. Additionally, if you are in the market for used equipment, you no longer are required to obtain three bids for purchase of that specific item. The fact you are buying used meets the public bidding process requirements.

Submitted by Nyle Zikmund, Chair