

## SAMPLE LETTERS TO-THE-EDITOR

Encourage neighbors/friends/family to send a letter to your local area newspapers (not to the Star Tribune or Pioneer Press)  
These are ideas – feel free to add to or make changes to these letters.

### LETTERS:

As a homeowner, I am outraged by the idea recently floated by the governor that would take the money I pay each year for fire fighters on my homeowner's insurance policy to use to pay for other things. It was less than five years ago that they added the surcharge on insurance policies to help pay to train fire fighters. And now to say that that dedicated fund should now be tossed into the state's checkbook for other things, well, I think that is wrong. I plan to watch closely how my legislators vote on this proposal. This is one fee that I will gladly pay, but only if it is used on fire fighters and not on other stuff.

-----

Every year, my homeowner's policy has a surcharge that goes to funding fire service. It is only a few dollars, and I gladly pay it, knowing that providing fire service is not a cheap endeavor and while I hope to never need their service, it is reassuring to know they are there. Now, I read that the Governor has proposed taking the money gathered by this surcharge to pay for things other than fire fighting. This is not an acceptable act for the governor to even propose, and I am certainly hoping that our elected officials in St. Paul sit up and take notice. There are few things that I expect from my tax dollar. A fire department that is ready to respond is one of these things. Don't raid the fire account.

-----

The fire hall down the street provides my family with a reassurance that should anything go wrong, they would be there to help out. But what if the building were just a façade, and inside, there were no fire fighters? That seems to be the sort of state the Governor wants, as he is currently proposing cutting all training funds from the state's fire departments in an effort to balance the budget. The vast majority of the state's fire fighters are volunteers. They put themselves into harm's way on a daily basis for little to no pay or recognition. They do it because it is an important task. But how many people are going to volunteer to risk their lives like this if they knew that they wouldn't get any training on how to do it safely? I don't want to find out. I hope our elected officials in St. Paul will pay attention to this terribly shortsighted position, and restore the proposed cuts, so that the fire hall down the street remains filled with fire fighters who are able to respond at a moment's notice to life's emergencies.

-----

With all the sacrifices that our local fire fighters make to ensure the safety of the community, I think it is high time we make some sacrifices of our own to show support for all they do. Faced by a giant budget deficit, the Governor is left with no choice but to propose a cut to the fire fighter training budget to help bridge the gap. The amount fire fighters get from the state is already minimal in comparison to other basic service providers. And yet this year, they are facing a total elimination of their training budget. Most of the state's fire fighters are volunteers already. The last thing we should be doing is taking away their opportunities to train to safely do their very dangerous job. We need to fix this budget, but on the backs of our hard working fire fighters is not the way. I encourage our leaders in St. Paul to protect the fire fighter training budgets and find a solution elsewhere.

--- over ---

## SAMPLE LETTERS TO-THE-EDITOR

Letters should be sent to your local area newspapers (not to the Star Tribune or Pioneer Press)

### **FIRE FIGHTER LETTERS:**

As a fire fighter, I write today to express my serious concerns about the proposal recently floated by the Governor that would drain our training fund to help fix the current budget deficit. Unlike other professions where training can be put off when times are tight, in fire fighting, we risk our lives on a daily basis, and training can literally be the difference between life and death for us. In a state where more than 80 percent of all fire fighters are volunteers, the state is already getting a tremendous bargain for its fire service needs. To remove our training budget puts not only our lives, but also the homes of every resident of this state at risk. It is time for our leaders to recognize the quiet yet vital contribution made by all fire fighters in this state and protect our training budget.

-----

Did you know that Minnesota currently spends less money on fire service than at least 45 other states? With a combination of a higher than average ratio of volunteer fire fighters, and a surcharge on property insurance policies that pays for most of the required training and services, we in the fire service are able to get by with minimal state support. That is why I am so offended that the governor is proposing draining the pool of dedicated funds that we get from the insurance surcharge to pay down old state debts. We don't ask for much. But when it comes to running into a burning building or responding to a car accident, these training dollars can literally be the difference between life and death for us. The state's budget is in need of help, and I think everyone understands that. But I hope the governor and our elected officials are smart enough to recognize that it is just wrong to risk lives by taking these funds that are dedicated to one of the most efficient government operations just to pay other bills.

-----

As a fire fighter, I find it unconscionable that the governor would even consider taking away the training budget used by fire departments around the state in order to help fix the current budget mess. The bulk of my brothers and sister s in the fire business already volunteer our time. We race into burning buildings to protect people and property in all corners of the state. We demand little recognition for our work, and we don't even ask for much money. With so many volunteers, the state is already near the bottom on how much it spends on us. And our training is covered by a surcharge placed on the insurance held by all property owners. The governor is proposing to drain the money in this dedicated account to pay for other priorities. I fail to see how any priority in this state could be more important than the safety and security of our residents. I urge the governor to reconsider this proposal, and, should he fail at that, I demand that our elected officials reject this plan to endanger our residents.

-----

If a fire alarm sounds, and no one is there to respond, is there still a fire? The governor is getting close to finding out the answer to this riddle by proposing a cut to the state's training budget for fire fighters. I am a volunteer fire fighter, and I know for a fact most of the state's fire fighters are also volunteering their time. As such, training is vitally important to ensuring our safety. The governor apparently thinks we will keep responding to fires, even if we lack the basic training necessary to ensure our own safety. This is a gamble the governor should not be making.

(over)