



**Orange County Fire Authority**  
**AGENDA STAFF REPORT**

**Legislative and Public Affairs Committee Meeting**  
**October 16, 2024**

**Agenda Item No. 3B**  
**Discussion Calendar**

**Preliminary Review of the 2025-26 Legislative Platform**

---

**Contact(s) for Further Information**

Robert C. Cortez, Assistant Chief  
Business Services Department

[robertcortez@ocfa.org](mailto:robertcortez@ocfa.org)

714.573.6012

Olina Wibroe-Benson, Legislative Affairs  
Manager/Business Services Department

[olinabenson@ocfa.org](mailto:olinabenson@ocfa.org)

714.573.6048

**Summary**

This item is submitted to solicit input from the Committee to incorporate into the draft OCFA 2025-26 Legislative Platform.

**Prior Board/Committee Action**

Not Applicable.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION(S)**

Review the proposed 2025-26 Legislative Platform and provide input to incorporate into the draft version to be presented at the January 15, 2025, Legislative and Public Affairs Committee meeting.

**Impact to Cities/County**

Not Applicable.

**Fiscal Impact**

Not Applicable.

**Background**

The attached document represents staff's proposed 2025-2026 Legislative Platform. Staff will provide a brief oral presentation on areas within the platform that will be of primary focus and solicit input from the L&PA Committee to incorporate into the draft version to be presented in January 2025.

**Attachment**

Preliminary OCFA 2025-26 Legislative Platform

# DRAFT 2025-26 Legislative Platform

---

## *Operations and Community Safety*

---

### Wildfire Prevention & Suppression

- Support increased state funding of CALFIRE, Contract Counties and other sources of funding for staffing and pre-positioning of resources during high threat periods (winds, drought, flooding)
- Support funding of aerial resources for both suppression and incident awareness and assessment (IAA)
- Support use of technology to forecast high fire risk conditions, wildfire progression (modeling), and monitoring (cameras, sensors, IAA)
- Support funding for education, fuel reduction, and planning to reduce fire ignitions and loss of life during wildfires

### Building & Development

- Support funding, tax incentives, and educational programs that encourage home hardening to reduce building ignition during wildfires from embers
- Oppose legislation or efforts to eliminate local discretion and input on developments (housing and commercial) in the Wildland Urban Interface
- Monitor legislation impacting the fire code and related topics (i.e., high rise buildings, hazardous materials, home hardening, etc.)
- Monitor legislation that mandates use of solar energy in new developments, mobile fueling expansion, and proposals for “new energy” infrastructure that impact fire and health safety codes

### Community Safety

- Support legislation and budget proposals that streamline enforcement, licensing and disposal of fireworks or explosive material
- Support legislation and funding for drowning prevention, swim education, and water safety

### Arson

- Support stronger penalties and efforts to prosecute arson crimes

### Disaster Recovery & UASI

- Support funding for Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) and other Department of Homeland Security grants that address regional or national threats, emergency preparedness, and communication

---

## *Emergency Medical Services and 911 System*

---

### BLS/ALS & Transport

- Support measures that increase Medi-CAL reimbursement to fire departments for ambulance transport and paramedic treatment
- Support measures that increase county and city authority to exercise local oversight and administration of the EMS system, including the design of service areas and contracting for service
- Support funding and the adoption of standards that improve firefighter safety
- Oppose mandated training or services by local EMS agencies without funding or cost recovery mechanisms

### Alternate Destination & Alternative Transport

- Support legislation that encourages local agencies, either through funding or regulatory reforms, to treat patients by transporting to appropriate alternate destinations

### Paramedic Licensing

- Monitor measures that revise paramedic licensing processes and impact OCFA hiring or promotional processes

### 911 Dispatch

- Support measures that reduce false or abusive use of 911 requests for services
- Support legislation and funding for the improvement or expansion of 911 dispatch centers, and establishing back-up systems and locations for continuity of operations

### Homeless and Behavioral Health

- Support legislation that provides resources and alternative avenues of health care to adequately address behavioral health issues

---

## *Administrative*

---

### Revenues, Fees, & Taxes

- Support the use of state and federal funds for wildfire mitigation, defensible space, and suppression efforts (i.e., California State Greenhouse Gas Reduction Funds, Federal Forestry, and other land management agencies)
- Oppose the diversion of local revenues, fees, and taxes by the state (i.e., State takeaways, property tax and sales tax “borrowing, etc.)

- Support legislation to increase cost recovery responding to emergency incidents at institutional facilities that are exempt from contributing to local tax base
- Support legislation to increase cost recovery responding to emergency incidents resulting from illegal activity

#### Employee Benefits/ Risk Management

- Support measures that limit OCFA's legal or insurance liabilities (i.e., improving efficiency of workers compensation review or settlement of claims)
- Monitor expansion or addition of new presumptive injuries or illnesses that force local agencies to provide benefits without considering if the injury or illness is related to employment
- Support measures that enhance or promote fire service employee safety

#### JPA Agreement

- Oppose efforts to restrict local control of JPA governance and any restriction on local design of JPA authority

#### Pensions

- Support measures that reduce liability and increase rate stability for local agencies

#### Logistics

- Monitor legislation that impacts design/construction of emergency buildings, fire vehicles, or 911 technology systems
- Support legislation that funds fire station construction or assists our member agencies in securing land for station construction
- Support legislation that funds or streamlines planning and installation of electric vehicle charging stations on secured public facilities and infrastructure for the use of essential and public safety employees

## **2025-2026 Federal Priorities**

### **I. National Urban Search and Rescue Team (US&R)**

OCFA is a sponsoring agency of California Task Force 5, one of 28 Task Forces across the country. These are Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) supported Task Forces that provide a federal response capability to nationally declared disasters. The system provides FEMA with a first responder capability using local agencies and personnel to administer and oversee the program. OCFA is responsible for administering federal funds to train and maintain local personnel and equipment that is deployed to national incidents.

In 2016, authorizing legislation was passed to address Task Force concerns with worker compensation, licensing of civilian members, and employment issues. The Task Forces have since then focused on increasing federal appropriations. Congress has for the last several years provided \$38 million annually.

OCFA will work with our national task force partners to advocate for additional funding for the US&R program. Additional funding is needed to replace critical equipment, enhance training, and fund capital replacement/improvement (vehicles, US&R warehouse).

### **II. Homeland Security & FEMA Grant Programs**

OCFA will work with other national groups to support increased federal funding of Fire Act grants from FEMA (SAFER, AFG), Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) funding from Department of Homeland Security, and the U.S. Fire Administration. Santa Ana and Anaheim receive UASI funds and work with OCFA and other fire/law enforcement agencies to address regional equipment and training needs.

### **III. Wildfire & Forest Management**

OCFA will support efforts to address vacancies and staffing concerns at the United States Forest Service (USFS) to ensure our federal partner can support state and regional incidents. In addition, we will continue to support additional grant funding for the USFS to administer awards at the local level for community level vegetation removal, defensible space, and wildfire prevention/planning.

OCFA may submit requests through our Representatives or US Senators for congressionally directed spending on projects such as OCFA's new wildland hand crew facility, helicopter replacement, or water refill facilities throughout our wildland areas. Other projects identified through OCFA's budget or capital outlay plans may be considered if eligible based on congressional priorities.

## **2025-2026 State Priorities**

### **I. Wildfire Mutual Aid Resources**

In 2022, OCFA secured a historic level of state funding (\$16.95 million) for the construction of a new Wildland Hand Crew Facility thanks to Senator Dave Min (D-Costa Mesa). An additional \$4.2 million in State budget funding was also secured for OCFA as one of six contract counties to expand our hand crew. This funding allowed OCFA to add a second year-around crew. The \$4.2 million is intended to be ongoing as a permanent increase to OCFA's contract county agreement with CALFIRE.

However, the State's 2023 fiscal situation appears to be taking a downturn with expectations of a budget deficit. OCFA will work with our contract county partners and labor representatives to ensure budget funding is provided.

OCFA will also seek support for our Air Operations, including plans to support and augment our helicopter fleet, and the continuance of funding provided by Southern California Edison to OCFA and others for increased aerial firefighting resources. Legislation in support of this program may be required and staff is researching options.

### **II. Fire Based Ambulance/Paramedic EMS Local Control**

Over recent years there have been various efforts to supersede local municipal control of fire-based EMS/ambulance/paramedic service delivery. The California Emergency Medical Services Authority (EMSA) is the state authority responsible for establishing standards for the training and scope of practice for EMS personnel. However, over the last several years the State EMSA has begun considering the establishment of new regulations that will intrude into local control in the design and level of service provided by fire-based municipal EMS agencies.

This effort was opposed by city and fire service leaders across the state, and the EMSA has now paused to allow for a workgroup to meet and discuss with fire service representatives. The OCFA will work with our local member agencies and statewide partners such as the League of Cities, California Fire Chiefs Association, and labor representatives to oppose any underground regulations imposed by EMSA on local agencies. Decisions on the design and level of service must continue to be made by local municipal fire-based EMS agencies that have been providing and funding those services.