



United Firefighters of Los Angeles City

Local 112, International Association of Fire Fighters

February 19, 2016

Honorable Herb Wesson
President
Los Angeles City Council
200 N. Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Council President Wesson:

I proudly serve as the President of the United Firefighters of Los Angeles City, representing the best Firefighters, Paramedics, Inspectors, Dispatchers, and Pilots in America.

I'm writing today regarding the motion put forth by Councilman Felipe Fuentes, which calls for fundamental changes in the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power that are worthy of discussion and consideration. In addition to changes to the governance structure of the DWP, this proposal calls for a "cap" on the annual transfer in surplus revenue from the DWP to our General Fund.

Understanding that more than 70% of the City's General Fund is used to fund the Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) and the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD), UFLAC has a concern regarding any proposals that will limit current and future General Fund revenue. This is especially important given the high amount of vacancies and critical staffing issues at the LAFD.

The LAFD is still the most understaffed big city fire department in the country. At our peak, we had more than 3,600 sworn Firefighters and Paramedics in the LAFD. Today we have approximately 3,200. As the population of our city continues to grow and the number of emergency calls for service continues to rise, the staffing levels at the LAFD have actually decreased over the past several years. This has led to an increase in response times, overtime costs (with UFLAC members being forced to work 48 hours of overtime per month), and Firefighter fatigue and injuries.

For a critical point of reference, here is how our staffing levels compare to a couple of other large American cities:

<u>City</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>Fire Staff</u>
Houston	2.2 million	3,800
Chicago	2.7 million	5,143
Los Angeles	3.9 million	3,200
New York City	8.5 million	15,000

As you can see, despite having over a million more residents than the next largest American city, we have fewer Firefighters and Paramedics than Chicago, Houston, and many others. New York City has little more than twice our population, but more than FOUR times the number of Firefighters and Paramedics that we have. Our calls for service continue to rise – in 2015 we had over 430,000 emergency calls for service, yet our staffing levels have not kept up with demand.

In the same week that the City Council is considering a proposal to “cap” the annual DWP transfer to the General Fund, it must be pointed out that just a few days ago in the City Council’s Public Safety Committee, LAPD Chief Charlie Beck told the Committee that he needs 2,500 additional LAPD officers to effectively police our streets. Like Firefighters, more Police Officers will require more revenue to the General Fund.

In the coming years, the cost of city government will continue to rise. As you continue these critical discussions, I implore you and your colleagues on the City Council to put forth a proposal that does not tie our hands for the future and allows for this vital source of General Fund revenue to grow over time at a reasonable rate to keep up with the cost of doing business.

The United Firefighters of Los Angeles City look forward to working with you on this important issue.

Sincerely,



Frank Lima
President
United Firefighters of Los Angeles City

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CC: Mayor Eric Garcetti
Los Angeles City Councilmembers
Fire Chief Ralph Terrazas
CAO Miguel Santana
Los Angeles Police Protective League