

Leave Our Fire Departments Alone

by [Michael G. Maness](#), *Tyler County Booster* (9-10-26): 4A & 5A.

Several friends and family have questions.

What brought on the attempt to take over the hiring of volunteer firefighters? What is the backstory?

How could the commissioners not know before the new law was tendered to them?

Of course, they had to know some, yet why was a round table not done months before?

Why were the firefighters themselves and the many communities that love them not informed months before?

Why were the fire chiefs not consulted, so they could consult with their brave volunteers?

Was they even a concern for the overburden on the “volunteers”?

How can the commissioners help the VFDs without adding extra burdens?

Do not the commissioners themselves hate unfunded mandates from the state?

For decades many of us have heard our commissioners decrying unfunded mandates, but why was the cost in time for the additional paperwork on VOLUNTEERS not considered?

Why was there no white paper “study” done before the proposed directive was presented. Why not a study of time from the very office asking to take over? Was this an attempt by the fire marshal/emergency manager to eventually get extra staff to help with his “inspections” and documentation overload this added bureaucracy would doubtlessly create? As with all state bills presented before congress, why was the projected monetary cost not attached and presented along with the Tyler County bill to usurp oversight and document and then review every prospective “volunteer” for the VFDs?

What was the backstory that led a few good county folks to think such usurpation good?

If a man or woman passed the muster of the local VFD and its chief, and was found a criminal, was there any study on how quickly that VFD fired that criminal? Seriously!

And, please, who thinks a former felon cannot renounce, convert, and become a good fireman? Certainly, being that none of us are without sin, then what, when, where, and who thought it good to totally distrust the local firemen and their chief in scrutinizing such an ex-felon?

Who thinks brave firemen grow on trees?

What were the qualifications and motives of the fire marshal and his story in this? If not him, then who, what, when, where did this “fire of distrust” begin? And to high heaven—why?

What is the need?

Most do background checks, so why is trusting these folks so hard?

Who was the first to say ALL the VFDs are not trustworthy and need hiring oversight?

Who was the second? Truly, who thinks the citizens of Tyler County do not need or want to know the entire backstory first, before this overburden is forced?

What research did the fire marshal do? Has he shared that research with anyone prior to soliciting the aid of the D.A. to construct this new mandate for court approval?

Why was the obvious burden not considered?



From the commissioner court hearing—thankful to Judge Powers for allowing so many so much time—there were more questions than answers, including a tenor of “How could this come about so fast with so few knowing?”

Because this unfunded burdensome mandate arrived at the court ready to implement with heavy requirements for so many good volunteers, why was the valuable “time” not calculated to implement and manage? If we can say a VFD manhour is worth at least \$35 per hour, why were the \$1,000s in manhours over the course of a year of zero interest?

Since an ominous worst cost was already being tolled after the revelation of the to-date nearly secret unfunded mandate presented to court, my goodness, why was the emotional toll on all our good firefighters and on the community that loves them worth zero consideration?

That is, once the unfunded mandate’s presentation to the court was out of the bag, at that very same time, why was trust in our VFDs allowed to burn so fast?

Since the fire is still burning hot, sapping morale, like the recent tire fire south of town multiple VFDs risked their lives to extinguish, therefore who will put this fire of distrust out?

Of course, standards and background checks are worthwhile, and why can we not trust our VFDs to do exactly that? Oh my, has someone or anyone found any of our VFD not trustworthy? Well, if they have, where is the documentation? Why was that documentation not presented before the court first? Presented to the people first?

These are our neighbors, for God’s sake!

If untrustworthy, then—by gosh—which one, where, and what is the story?

Please, why cannot the citizens who love our firefighters know what the score is before the court totally burns down TRUST both they and we have in our beloved VFDs?

Truly, before an unfunded mandate is forced and adds gasoline to this fire of distrust, why not ask the person who started it to do a thorough study for public consumption?

After the study, then have a round table on how to help our VFDs.

Who else will help put out this fire of distrust towards our brave VOLUNTEER firefighters?



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