

From: [Isaac McLennan](#)
To: [Council Clerk – Testimony](#)
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Attachments: [Portland City Council Testimony - Mandatory Overtime LOA FINAL.pdf](#)
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PORTLAND FIRE FIGHTERS' ASSOCIATION

IAFF LOCAL 43



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Portland City Council Testimony - Mandatory Overtime LOA
April 5, 2023 Council Agenda Item # 266

Mayor Wheeler and Council, thank you for your time today. For the record, my name is Isaac McLennan. I'm the President of the Portland Fire Fighters' Association, IAFF Local 43 which represents 751 firefighters and EMTs with the City of Portland and the Port of Portland. I'm also a full-time firefighter and proud Portland resident in the Roseway neighborhood.

I would like to address two concerns I've heard regarding this agreement for firefighters to work forced mandatory overtime; callback bonuses and washing personal vehicles. Before that, I want to point out that firefighters in Portland understand the risks of our work. We accept them every day we put on our uniform. But we need to know that our elected officials support us. Our morale needs a boost. It has been a rough three years. We are being forced to work extra hours to keep our communities and ourselves safe - but we are also taking on massive additional risk to our physical and mental health. I encourage you to support us by supporting this ordinance.

1. Currently many firefighters are working over 70 hours a week and some over 100. This is all in the service of safe staffing levels - there is a minimum number of firefighters and apparatus that need to be operating on any given day to keep the community safe, and to keep firefighters safe. By contract, we agreed to regularly work 50.4 hours a week in contrast to most workers who work 40 hours a week. Given that there are 168 hours in a week, this means we spend one third of our lives at work. With the necessity for overtime we are spending a half to two thirds of our lives at work. The clear path forward is to give PF&R more position authority and hire more firefighters to reduce the need for overtime to a manageable and sustainable level. But until this long-term solution happens, we need to bridge the gap. This agreement for callback bonuses will help evenly spread out the additional workload we are shouldering, incentivizing people to sign up to work when they're physically able to.

Hopefully this helps to eliminate the need to force mandatory shifts, when people find out 15 minutes before they're supposed to go home that they have to stay another 24 hours. Imagine what this does to our families, to partners now scrambling for childcare so they can go to work, not to mention what it does to an exhausted firefighter. The agreement also acknowledges the extra time we are away from our homes and families working to keep our community safe. We are not just taking on additional hours - we are also taking on additional risks to our health. Firefighters are at an increased risk for cancer, sleep-deprivation related issues, suicide, and divorce - and that's when we're working our contracted hours.

2. Regarding washing vehicles: the firehouses are our homes for at least a third of our lives. We treat them as such, caring for them as we would our personal homes. We are active and efficient people. When we are not responding to an emergency, we fill our time taking care of the fire trucks, training, cleaning the station, cooking our meals, and maintaining our physical fitness. We also occasionally work on personal projects or clean our personal vehicles. This is not an exercise in vanity - it is in service to our mental health. What we see on a daily basis takes a toll on us. Washing our personal vehicles has been a practice since cars, soap and water existed at a firehouse; something methodical we can do to destress. It has been an accepted practice across the country for decades, as has picking up garbage outside our firehouse, cleaning the rooftops and gutters, sweeping the sidewalks, cleaning the toilets and mowing the lawns. Reinstating car washing would at least be something that helps us feel seen by city officials.

Let us know that we matter and you care with your actions by supporting this ordinance and supporting your firefighters.

Thank you for your time.