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Merrill Fire Department Highlights Benefits of Wisconsin Fire Dues Program

State presents check for \$50,000 to Merrill Fire Chief

Merrill, Wis. -- Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services (DSPS) Secretary Dan Hereth and Wisconsin Commissioner of Insurance Nathan Houdek presented a ceremonial check for more than \$50,000 to City of Merrill Fire Department Chief Josh Klug on Tuesday, the department's share of funding from the Wisconsin 2% Fire Dues Program.

"Safety is a vital part of our department's mission, and our state fire departments are the backbone of safety in Wisconsin communities," said DSPS Secretary Dan Hereth. "Ensuring that safety mean funding our fire departments, and the Fire Dues Program is a major source of funding."

The 2% Fire Dues Program requires insurers to pay 2% of premiums collected for insurance against loss from fires. The Office of the Commissioner of Insurance (OCI) collects the dues, and DSPS distributes the dues to hundreds of cities, villages, and towns across Wisconsin according to a prescribed formula. This summer, Wisconsin professional, volunteer, and hybrid fire departments received \$32.2 million through the program, a 22% increase over the previous year.

"This program is all about prevention. Fire departments across our state can take their share of the Fire Dues funding and put it towards the programs that best serve their communities. We're proud to play a part in this collaboration," said Commissioner Houdek.

Wisconsin fire departments can use the Fire Dues funding in a variety of ways to keep communities safe, including buying and replacing equipment, producing fire prevention programming, training crews, and more. Merrill has used some of its annual funding to keep a dedicated Fire Inspector on staff.

"Previously, we had employees filling in that role on a rotating basis," explained Merrill Fire Chief Josh Klug. "Having someone dedicated to that job allows our other fire staff to concentrate on their work, and for our local businesses it provides consistency. There is no question about whom to contact with questions about fire inspections."

Chief Klug and Fire Inspector Joe Bozinski joined Merrill Mayor Steve Hass and City Administrator Rod Akey to accept the ceremonial check for \$50,872.26.

About DSPS:

DSPS issues more than 240 unique licenses, administers dozens of boards and councils that regulate professions, enforces state building codes, and maintains the Wisconsin Enhanced Prescription Drug Monitoring Program, which is a key tool in the multi-faceted public health campaign to stem excessive opioid prescribing. A fee-based agency, DSPS is self-sustaining and receives no general fund tax dollars for its day-to-day operations. With two offices and roughly 250 employees, DSPS collaborates with constituents and stakeholders across a wide range of industries to promote safety and advance the economy.