

Ambulance Fee Legislation Poses a Threat in 2009.

Call the Council and Express Your Opposition to Bill 25-08,

"EMS Transport Fee"

Thank you for expressing your opposition.

Take action now, write our Council Members. View a sample letter to send to the Montgomery County Council here: <http://www.StopAmbulanceFee.org>

Several reasons exist to oppose ambulance fees:

Residents might be discouraged from calling 911. We have found no study or analysis that looks beyond jurisdiction-wide call statistics and examines specifically how ambulance fees affect the uninsured, under-insured, and other less-advantaged groups. The County refuses to do such research. **In Fairfax County, the per capita number of calls to 9-1-1 dropped once a fee was instituted. Thus, the fee could jeopardize lives.**

The County should not turn an important public service into a profit-making center.

Documents released by the County reveal that paid consultants have urged the County to maximize profits by “establishing rates that are comfortably above the approved Medicare fee schedule” and to re-train ambulance personnel “to fully realize these revenue projections.” **Fire and rescue personnel should be saving lives, not altering their protocols to inflate government revenues.**

Claims regarding Fire/Rescue budget needs are suspect. According to the Executive’s budget, revenue from the Fire Tax, fire code permits and enforcement, and federal/state grants in FY 2009 will exceed fire/rescue operating expenses by \$12 million (assuming no ambulance fee). (See <http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/omb/FY09/psprec/frs.pdf> at page 7).

The overage should be available to address important capital needs (e.g., new stations, additional vehicles). While the legislation proposes using the fee to "supplement" expenditures for fire/rescue needs, the language is too subject to interpretation. Many subjective chargebacks and assignments of overhead costs occur in the budget process - a quid pro quo will occur that negates the intent of this provision. **Moreover, no business plan exists for the fee. Not all insurance companies will pay the fee—which undercuts the Executive’s revenue predictions.**

County government expenditures, including within the Fire/Rescue System, need examining.

Alternatives exist. Recent press accounts have highlighted the need for the County to eliminate wasteful spending. **The County needs to examine its spending practices to ensure efficiency before it hits County residents in the pocket with additional fees. Moreover, the County has not explored alternative ways of saving money, such as maximizing the use of professionally trained volunteers.**

Charging Residents for Services Often Provided By Volunteers. More than 150 professionally trained volunteers at the B-CC Rescue Squad serve as EMTs, Paramedics and Firefighters. Hundreds more serve in other departments. **We believe the County should not charge for a service we provide for free.**

The Views of Others. Many groups have declared their opposition to this latest ambulance fee proposal, including:

The Montgomery County Volunteer Fire-Rescue Association
Montgomery County Fire/Rescue Commission
Montgomery County League of Women Voters
Montgomery County Civic Federation
The Western Montgomery County Citizens' Advisory Board
The Silver Spring Citizens' Advisory Board
Town of Chevy Chase
Town of Kensington
Town of Somerset
Bethesda-Chevy Chase Chamber of Commerce
Leisure World Democratic Club
Bethesda Fire Department
Bethesda-Chevy Chase Rescue Squad
Burtonsville Volunteer Fire Department
Cabin John Park Volunteer Fire Department
Chevy Chase Fire Department
Damascus Volunteer Fire Department
Gaithersburg-Washington Grove Fire Department
Germantown Volunteer Fire Department
Glen Echo Volunteer Fire Department
Hillandale Volunteer Fire Department
Hyattstown Volunteer Fire Department
Kensington Volunteer Fire Department
Laytonsville District Volunteer Fire Department
Rockville Volunteer Fire Department
Sandy Spring Volunteer Fire Department
Silver Spring Volunteer Fire Department
Takoma Park Volunteer Fire Department
Upper Montgomery County Volunteer Fire Department
Wheaton Volunteer Rescue Squad

Take Action Now

Please call or email your Councilmember (and all others if possible) to express your opposition to Bill 25-08, "Emergency Medical Services Transport Fee." Thank you for your support. Download a sample letter at <http://www.StopAmbulanceFee.org>