

LETTER TO GEORGIA INSURANCE COMMISSIONER RALPH HUDGENS

Below is a letter to Insurance Commissioner Ralph Hudgens from the Board of Directors of the Georgia State Firefighters Association expressing displeasure and protesting the dismissal of State Fire Marshal Alan Shuman and Director of the State Arson Unit, Steve Sprouse. All members are encouraged to contact their local representatives and voice their opinion, and provide their representative with a copy of this letter.

"Commissioner, I write you out of respect and frustration. The Board of the Georgia State Firefighters Association would like to express our disappointment at the dismissal of the State Fire Marshal Alan Shuman and the Director of the State Arson Unit, Steve Sprouse. We in the Georgia Fire Service have worked with these two gentlemen for many years and have tremendous respect for both.

Alan Shuman in particular has not only been a great Fire Marshal for the State of Georgia but is one of the most respected individuals in the fire service in the entire United States. Recently at the Georgia Association of Fire Chief's Spring Conference, Chief Shuman was recognized for his leadership in making Georgia a national leader in Fire Safety. Furthermore this is an embarrassment to our State because Chief Shuman is serving as President of the National State Fire Marshals Association. Has our great State reached such a rock bottom that we cannot support our own in a very important national position that brings nothing but positive back to Georgia?

It is no secret that during the 2011 session of the General Assembly that we in the fire service and your office had different opinions over Senate Bill 186, and during the legislative session we made it clear to the members of the General Assembly that if SB 186 did not pass we were afraid that personnel of the state who had no input on SB 186 may be punished. We trust that this is not the case in this situation and that your office is operated on a high enough integrity that such action would not take place.

It is suspect to those of us in the fire service that the firings of Alan Shuman and Steve Sprouse are exactly that. We are suspicious of these dismissals and they are uncalled for and may be completely politically motivated. Our membership is now convinced that our calls for and the need of the fire service in Georgia to be headed by a non-politician is more urgent than ever. It is time the lives of Georgians were put first and not the power of politicians.

As we move forward, we will continue to work in a positive manner that is productive for Georgia. We will do so with caution in our fledgling relationship.

On behalf of our Executive Board and the membership of the Georgia State Firefighters Association, again, we express our strong disapproval and disappointment of the dismissal of Alan Shuman and Steve Sprouse."
