



# ANNUAL REPORT

## May 2020-May 2021

### Washington Fire Chiefs

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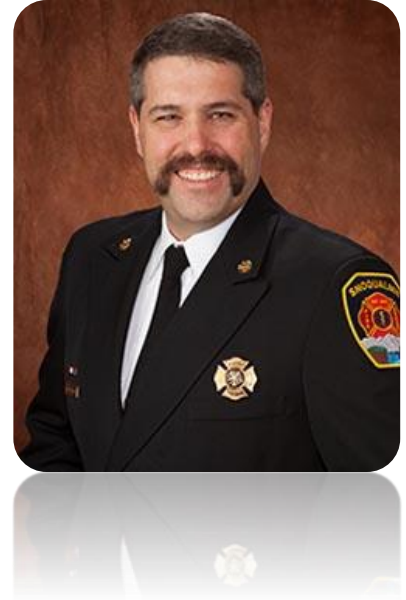
## Washington Fire Chiefs Staff:

Steve Wright, Executive Director  
Kathleen Harmon, Office Manager  
Elisa Grabner, Financial Support

# MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

## Year Review

The year - 2020 - will be a year that will be branded in everyone's mind for a very long time. When the first Covid-19 patient in the United States arrived in Everett on January 20, 2020, followed by the outbreak in the Kirkland Nursing Home on February 28, Ground Zero was established for a cascade of events that will change the fire service for a very long time. 2020 was also the year of significant change for the Washington Fire Chiefs Association. It was the year former Executive Director Wayne Senter retired, and Steve Wright assumed this role. Wayne was a seasoned fire service leader who built strong relationships with fire service partners and allowed the Association to thrive. Like many previous leaders, he left the Association better than he found it.



## Sustainability

When Steve assumed the role of Executive Director in 2020, he hit the ground running. He quickly realized that a few changes needed to be made if the organization was to continue to be successful. First, because the Association's Conferences were canceled due to COVID restrictions, he recognized the need to change the long-established dues structure. Historically, the Association relied on Conference revenue to offset the operational costs - an unsustainable model. With the change in dues structure, Steve has developed a plan to move the Association into a stronger financial position.

## Improved Communication

The Association also embarked on improving communication with the different stakeholders throughout 2020. Under Steve's leadership, the Association developed a plan for more transparency and better communication with all local agencies. From one-on-one meetings

with fire chiefs to County Association President's meeting, the Association is more transparent and accessible than ever before.

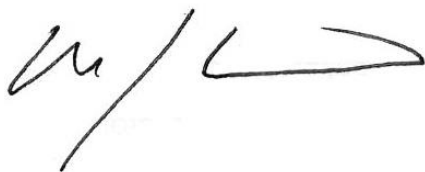
## Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

In 2020, an initiative that I am most proud of was the Association's attention to fire service diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). In 2018, only 8% of career firefighters nationwide were female, and 18% were people of color. This falls short compared to other similar professions like law enforcement (12% female, 27% people of color) and the military (15% female, 40% people of color). To begin addressing this, the Association assembled a DEI Committee made of passionate fire service professionals whose goal is to make a difference to this fire service landscape. They have evaluated the Association's current policies, procedures, and website. They have developed a work plan to begin supporting agencies that want to make a difference in their departments. Assistant Chief Julie Oberg (Spokane) is leading this effort, and I am confident she and the DEI Committee team will move the needle on fire service diversity in the State.

## Future Plans

As we emerge from the pandemic in 2021, this new normal will set the stage for the future. This year has proven the strength of the Fire Service and how we can adapt to whatever is thrown at us. I am so very proud of the Washington Fire Service and the resiliency it has shown. I am also very proud and thankful for the leadership and adaptability Steve, Kathleen, and Elisa made in 2020. I am confident the Association is stronger than it has ever been, and the future is bright. It has been an honor and privilege to serve all of you as the President of the Washington Fire Chiefs.

With utmost respect,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Correira', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mark Correira  
President

# MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## Year Review

The year 2020 will no doubt hold a lasting spot in everyone's memory around the globe. For the Washington State fire service, the challenges of the pandemic only added to the work we do and how we did it. At the Washington Fire Chiefs (WFC) it also was a year of transition and an opportunity for change. The pandemic brought about changes to "business as usual" for the association with the shutting down of the Olympia office, work from home and the cancelation of our annual conferences. It also challenged us with the inability to meet in person to conduct WFC business or solve problems brought to our attention through our normal network of relationships.



## New Leadership

In June, this past year our Executive Director of the past six and a half years, Wayne Senter retired. A search and testing process brought the opportunity for me to accept the Boards offering of the open position on July 1<sup>st</sup>. With eight years on the WFC Board of Directors and having served as both vice president and president, I felt it was a good opportunity to retire after 34 years with South Kitsap Fire Rescue and take on this new role. It proved to be a challenging time for a major life change as well as establishing what the new normal would be for the WFC and our office. The cancelation of all our educational offering including three significant annual conferences brought about losses in revenue and the need to restructure our financial practices. After several months of work, office furloughs and a staff reduction, a new budget, dues structure and plan was approved by the membership to move the WFC forward into the future.

## Adjustments to "Business As Usual"

Throughout this past year the impacts of the pandemic on our responders and agencies were unprecedented. Determining the proper response protocols, personal protective equipment (PPE) and patient care practices involved relationships with the Washington State Council of

Firefighters, Labor and Industries and the Department of Health, to name a few. The WFC worked closely with state and local emergency management and kept the conversation active concerning PPE supplies, emergency funding and eventually vaccinations for our responders. At this point the new normal for our response and responders is well established but we continue to work on issues related to the eventual end of the pandemic and the unknown of what the future will hold for our agencies, communities, and country.

## Looking Forward

As we turn the page into 2021 the WFC is active working in Olympia (virtually) with the legislative session underway. There are many challenges with the state budget shortfall as well as with key issues that impact our membership. Plans are being developed for our yearly educational offerings both virtually and in person as the pandemic allows. We have learned many things about conducting business in this new reality and recognize there are things that we will want to continue with in the future for efficiencies. Admittedly we all look forward to getting back to some level of meeting in person and having the ability to network and personally share in conversation with each other.

I look forward to the year ahead and serving as the Executive Director for the WFC. Our future is promising and the work before us is vital for the continued success of the Washington fire service. This annual report breaks down our work on the strategic plan goals as well as provides summaries of other work accomplished this past year at the WFC office.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Wright". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "S" and "W".

Steve Wright  
Executive Director

# ASSOCIATION LEADERSHIP

Washington  
Fire Chiefs  
Elected  
2020  
Board of  
Directors



**Mark Correia**  
Vice President  
Snoqualmie FD



**Hank Teran**  
Position 1  
Bainbridge Island FD



**Keith Wright**  
Past President  
Central Pierce F&R



**Ben Andrews**  
Position 1  
Clallam County FD 3



**Matt Morris**  
Position 2  
Valley RFA



**Lonnie Rash**  
Position 4  
Spokane Fire District 8



**Kevin O'Brien**  
Position 5  
Lake Stevens Fire



**Kristan Maurer**  
Position 6  
Clark County FD 6



**Dave LaFave**  
Position 7  
Cowlitz 2 Fire & Rescue



**Rocky Eastman**  
Position 8  
Walla Walla Co FD #4

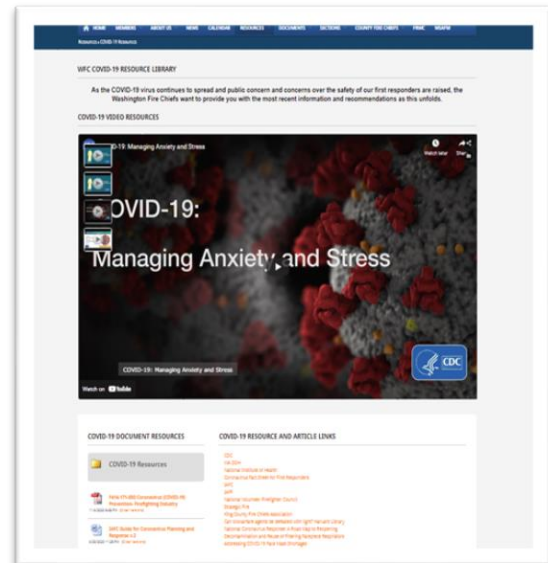


**Steve Brooks**  
WFCA-WA VP  
Lacey FD 3

# COVID IMPACTS

This year the Association was forced to take a hard look at “business as usual” as we faced a schedule of canceled events, long term business office closures and the world coming to a full halt.

Our first priority was to provide pertinent information to our membership. To this end we monitored all information being disseminate and ensured that our member agencies received model guidance and policies from CDC, the IAFC and other resources as soon as they were available. We distributed these resources initially via email blasts, then quickly set up a resource portal to provide a dedicated place to find resources related to COVID on the WFC website.



As COVID continued, we engaged Labor & Industries regarding the complication of face masks and other safety precautions in our fire stations. We lobbied with the IAFC and Special Districts for funding for the fire service and shared information as grant opportunities and recovery funding became available.

To ensure that education continued during these times, the WFC converted all of our monthly webinars to free events. We also worked to move EVIP certification to an online platform so trainers could continue to the get trainer certification despite the moratorium on in person events.

The Summer of 2020 brought new leadership and a fresh look at the association’s struggling financial problems. It was quickly assessed that dues would need to be reorganized to put the emphasis on funding the association’s critical services through dues rather than unpredictable event revenue.

2020 will be a year we will not quickly forget. Many of the steps we took this year have bettered the association and will make us stronger in the future.



# FINANCIAL SUMMARY

## COVID Financial Impacts

Due to COVID all in person events were canceled for 2020. Traditionally the association has been funded by a combination of dues and event revenue. Dues make up about 40% of the association's revenue. It was quickly apparent that without event revenue, the association would quickly use its reserves to keep the business office and basic infrastructure intact.

## Bridging the Gap

In July, the association took steps to limit the amount of funding spent over the summer. This included laying off the general support position, as well as furloughs for the Executive Director and Office Manager. The association also explored grant opportunities and federal funding that was available to bridge the gap between July and October, when dues revenue would begin to come in. Since the WFC did not qualify as a trade association for the Paycheck Protection program, we pursued a Small Business Administration EIDL loan of \$100K to ensure the association could make it through the year. Due to the cost saving steps the WFC took in July and August, we were able to avoid spending the loan money.

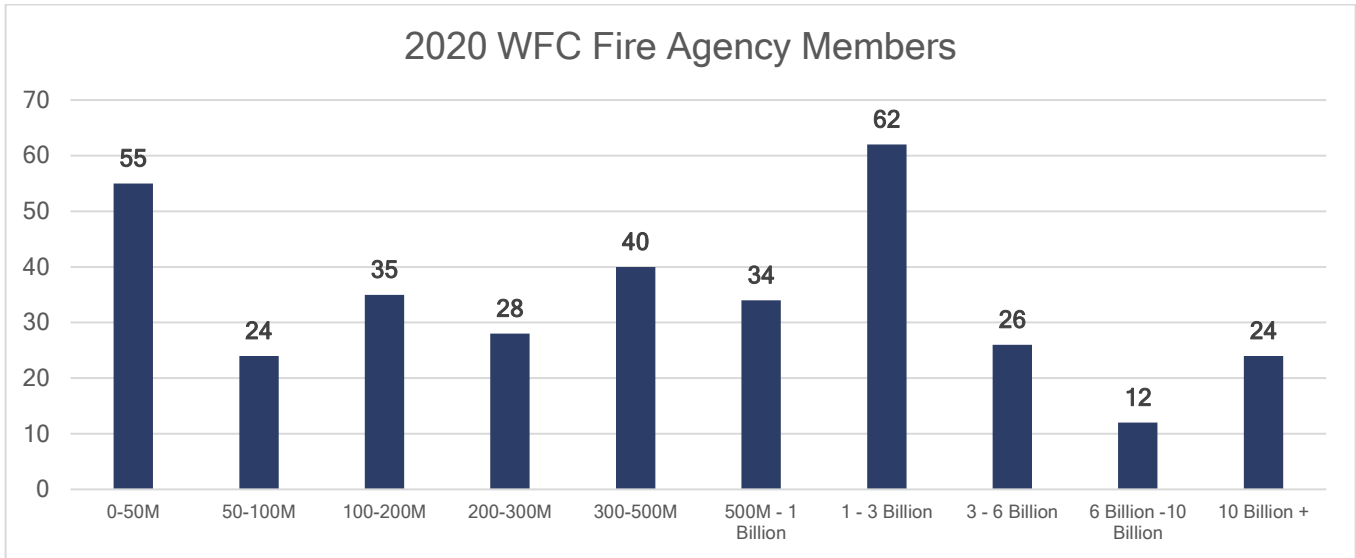
## Fixing the System

The practice of relying on event revenue to provide the majority of funding for the business office was unsustainable. In September the WFC proposed, and the membership passed, a dues restructure that funds the general business operations of the association at 100%.

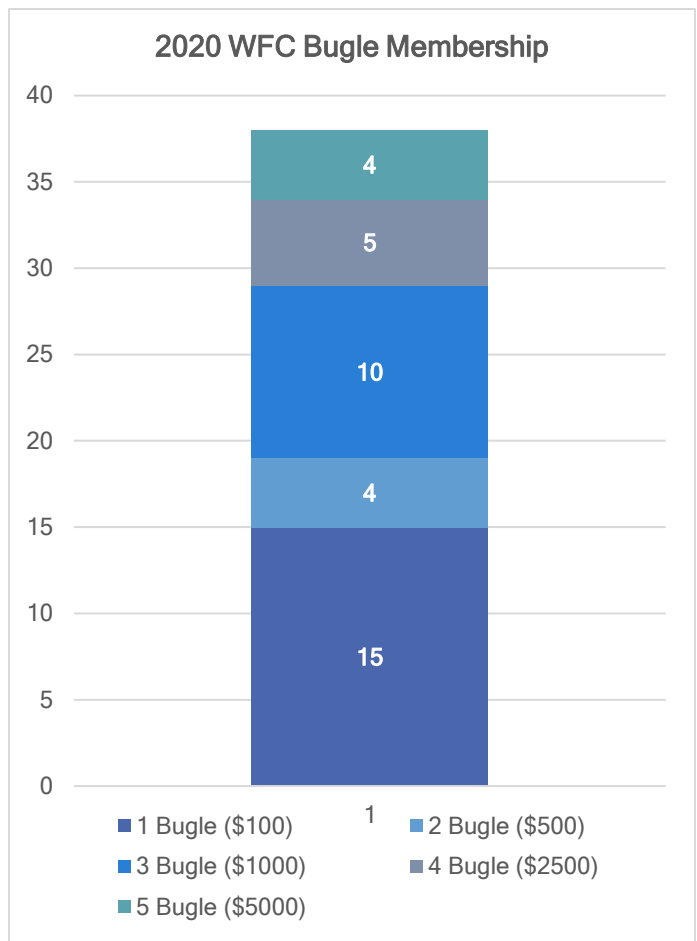
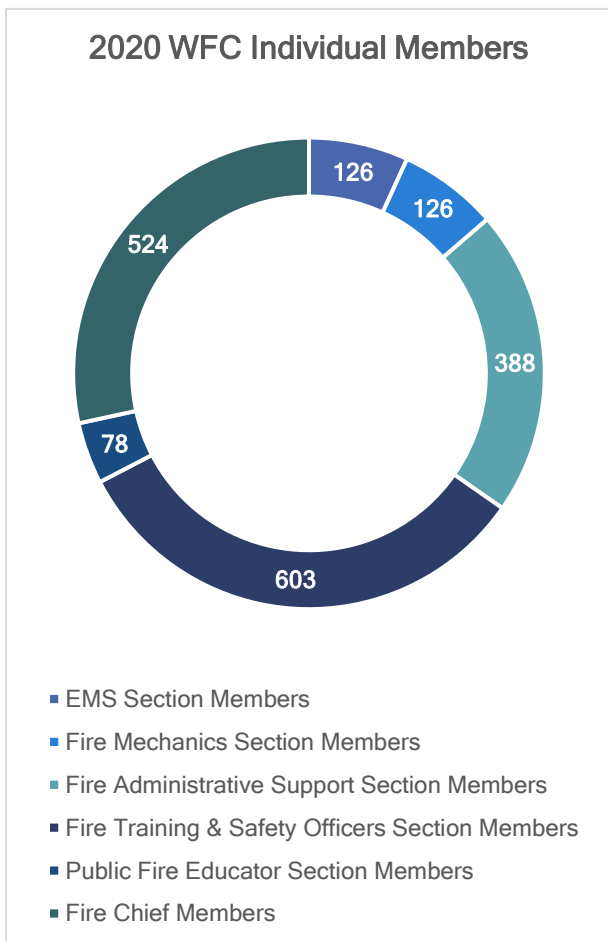
## A New Foundation

Moving forward, the association created an Operational Budget in October, that accounts for all of the association's general expenses. Event budgets (such as conferences, workshops, webinars, etc...) will be treated as stand alone budgets that will be created in the beginning event planning stages. The revenue raised by events will be reinvested in ways that provide value to the membership. Sections will now retain a running balance from their conference revenue, with the ability to use those funds to enhance their events. Budget plans were developed to create a general reserve fund, as well as a Capital Contingency Budget to plan specialized reserves for sections, events and other areas of financial risk.

# 2020 MEMBERSHIP



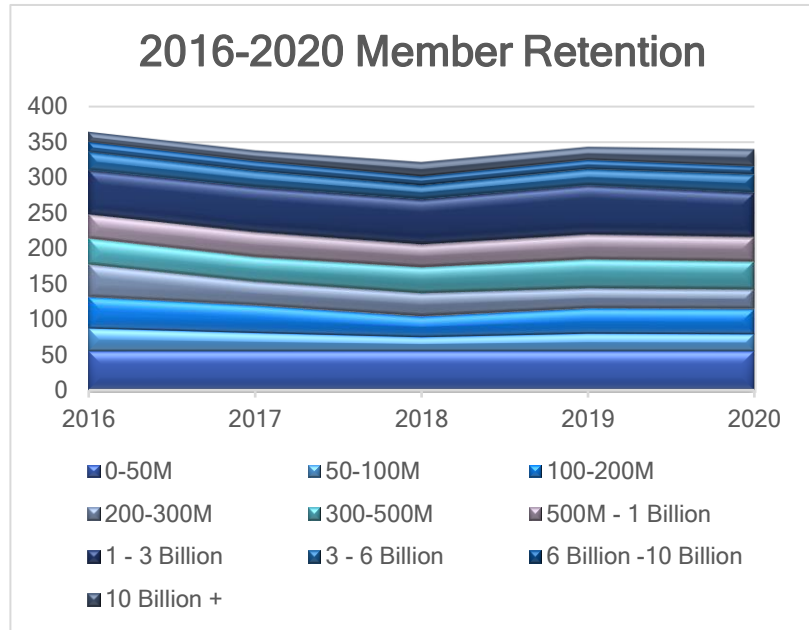
*The WFC Maintained 99% retention of fire agency members compared to the 2019 membership year.*



# STRATEGIC GOALS

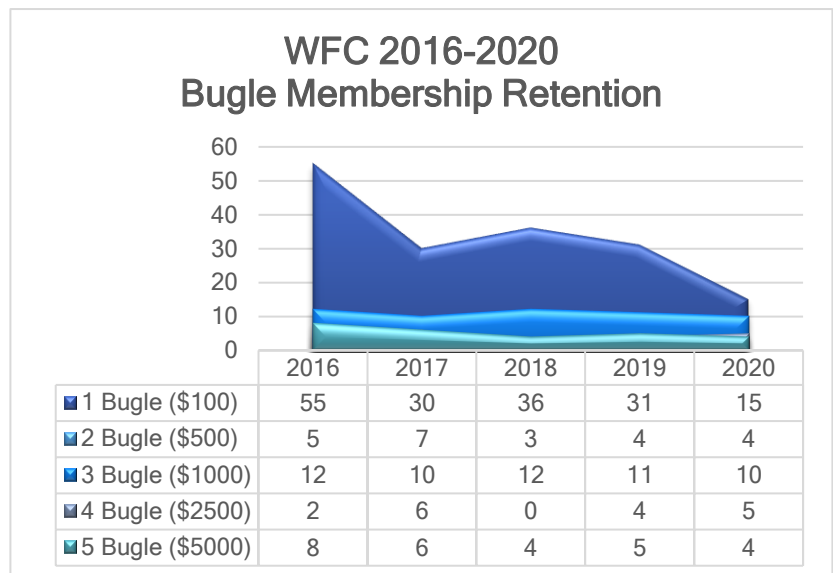
**Goal 1: Increase membership value in the eyes of current and potential members as measured by membership recruitment and retention data.**

The WFC has made member retention a priority. Despite the fact that every year a handful of potential member agencies are lost due to consolidations and mergers, the WFC has only seen a reduction of 8% in membership in paid member agencies over the past 5 years. Our retention can continue to be improved with better communication, and success at meeting members' needs.



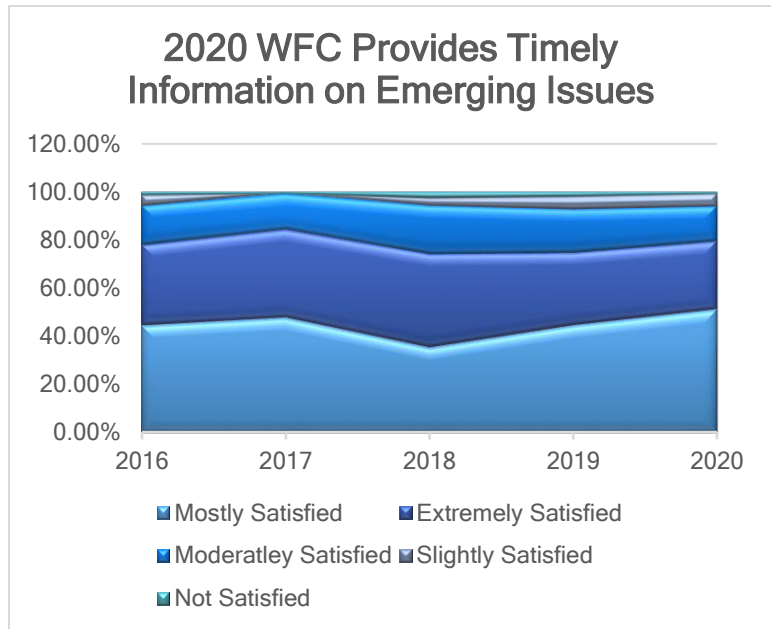
**Goal 2: Increase revenues through partnerships with vendors, fire service stakeholders and the FRWC as measured against historic annual revenues.**

This was a rough year for Bugle Memberships. Due to COVID, all events were canceled for 2020, and many of the benefits of Bugle membership are tied to conference related publications and event space. We are grateful to those businesses that have continued to support us during these difficult financial times.

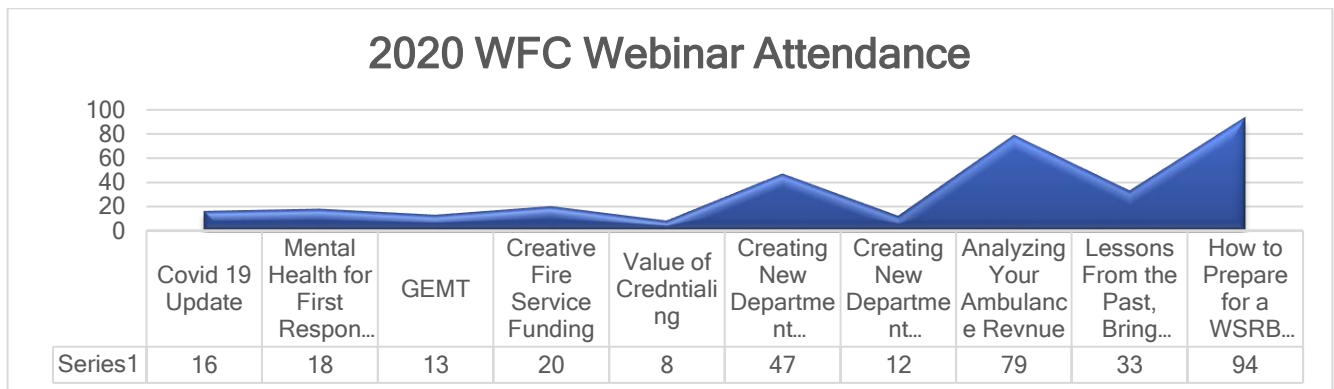


**Goal 3: Increase proactive communication and contact with members on critical issues as measured by feedback from internal stakeholders.**

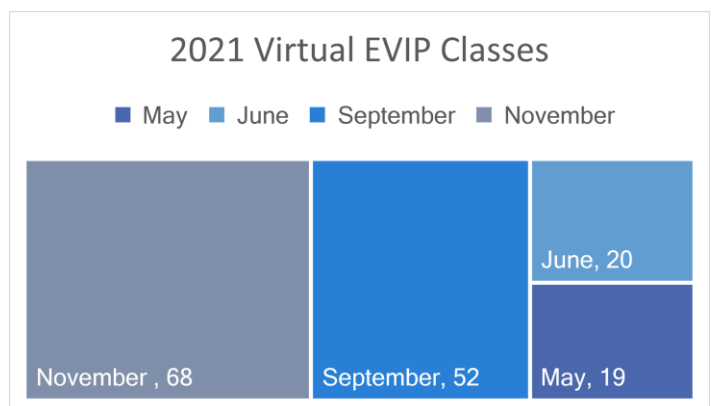
The sharing of information on critical issues such as COVID was vital during 2020. Compared to 2019, we saw a 5% increase in member satisfaction (Extremely Satisfied & Mostly Satisfied). The WFC would like to build on this member satisfaction by continuing to improve communication methods, and providing more opportunities for members to interface with the WFC staff and board.



**Goal 4: Provide relevant and timely professional development opportunities as measured by event surveys, event attendance and event profit.**



Due to the COVID 19 pandemic and the cancelation of all in person education, the WFC quickly pivoted the educational offerings to free webinars. In addition, a quick solution was needed to host EVIP train the trainer virtually as in person training was not a possibility and instructor’s certifications were expiring.



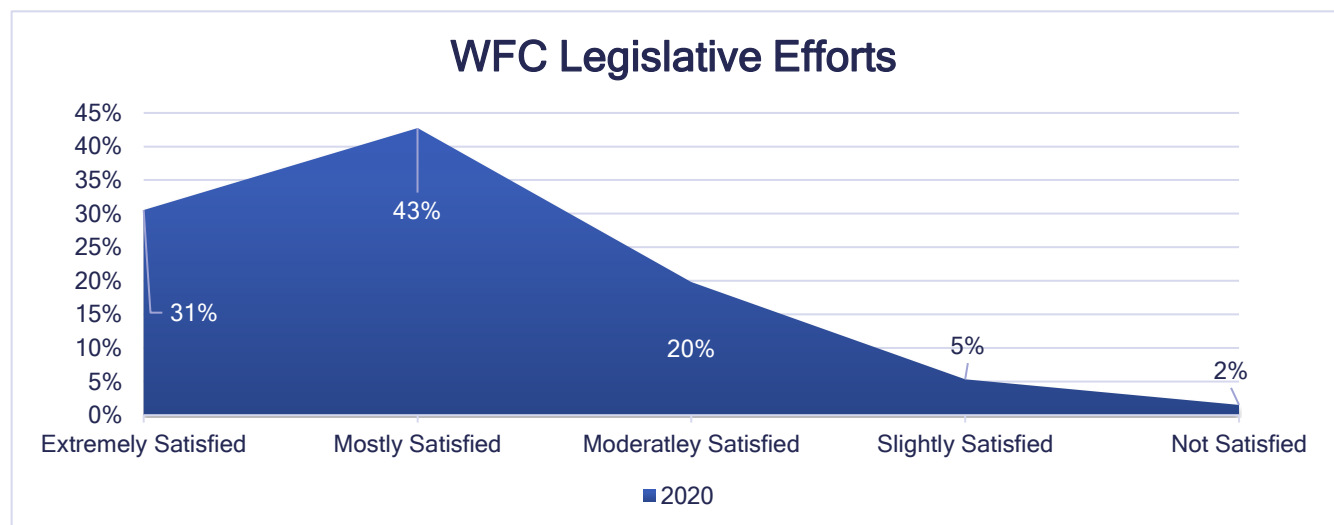
## Goal 5: Strengthen and improve external relationships as measured by feedback from board members and staff from those organizations.

Communication with fire service stakeholder groups is key to the success of the fire service in Washington State. To that end, leadership has put a priority on attending meetings such as the Leadership Forum. Despite the pandemic making in person meetings impossible, staff and board members attended meetings virtually, and reached out regularly to stakeholder groups discuss common concerns. The Executive Director also schedules periodic meetings with the Fire Commissioners Association, Washington State Council of Firefighters, State Fire Marshal's office, DNR and many others.

## Goal 6: Build on existing legislative relationships to maximize influence in the legislative process as measured by our effectiveness on a collective fire service agenda.

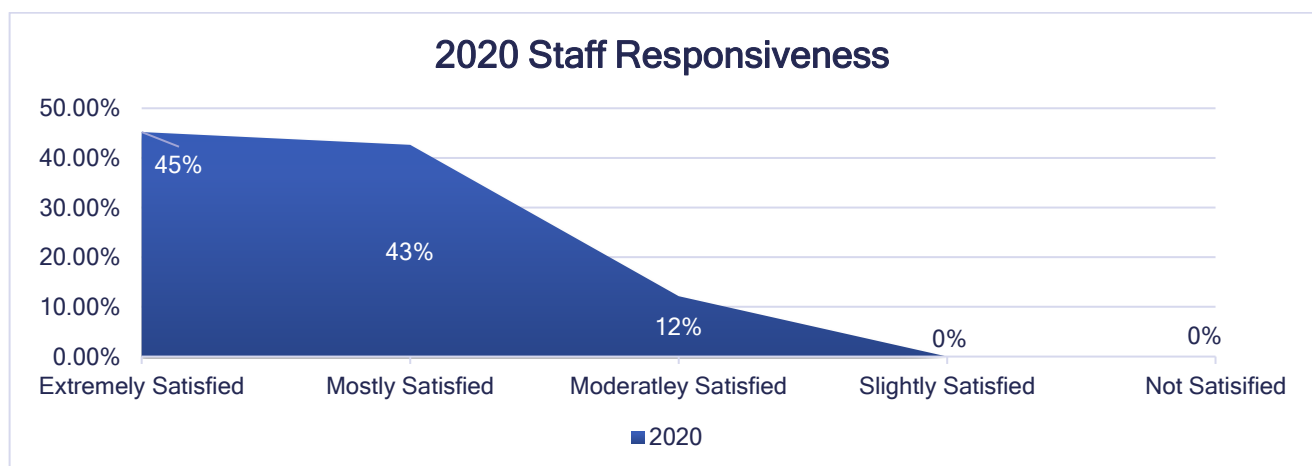
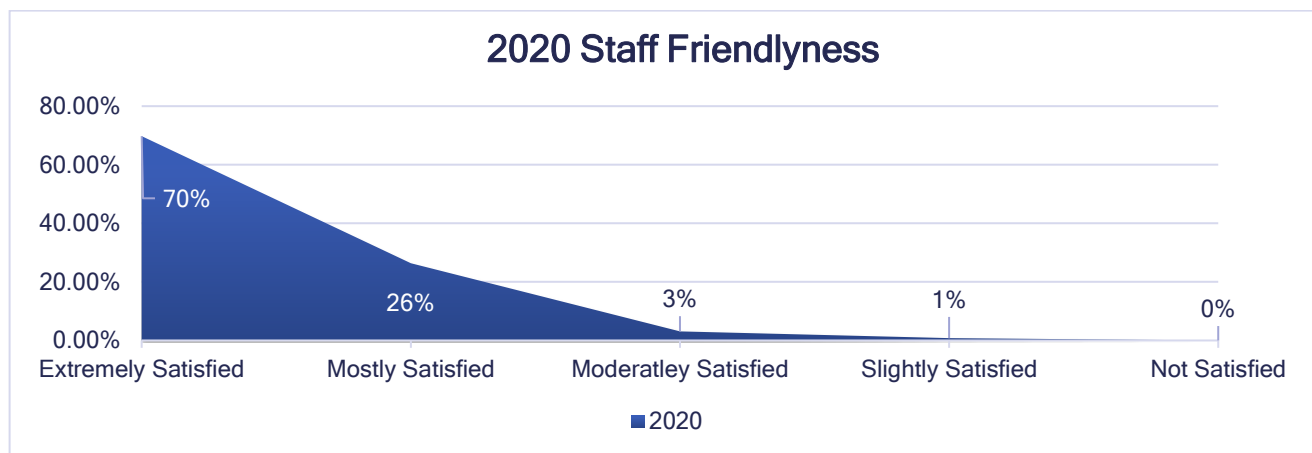
The WFC Lobbyist and Legislative Committee worked on a number of legislative items in 2021, these were the bills the fire service collectively worked to pass.

- HB 1168 (Springer), DNR Forest Health and Wildfire Mitigation SB
- HB 1477 (Orwall), Implementing the 988 System
- HB 1159 (Berg), Concerning the Number of Fire District Commissioners
- HB 1189 (Duerr), Tax Increment Financing HB 2783, Mobile On-Demand Fuel Providers



**Goal 7: Strengthen support staff relationships and office systems in an environment that is positive and continues to meet the needs of our customers as measured by staff/customer feedback during annual reviews.**

This was a truly challenging year for staff. In March the office went fully remote to comply with the Governor’s “Stay at Home” orders. Staff learned new systems, implemented new processes to keep everything running smoothly, even while each staff member worked from their own home. In June due to funding issues leadership was forced to lay off the General Support position, and staff implemented voluntary furloughs. However, with the budget changes that took effect in October, it provided staff with a much more sustainable business model going forward. Member feedback shows a 4% increase in member satisfaction in staff responsiveness, despite the challenges of remote working.



## Goal 8: Provide resources and assistance to members when they are facing a crisis as measured by customer satisfaction feedback.

One of the most vital benefits the WFC provides to members is one on one assistance to members. Sometimes that can mean a call from the Executive Director, other times that might mean the WFC office connects a member with experts or other members who have been through a similar circumstance. The WFC handles an average of 3 to 4 of these calls a month, which can range from serious HR issues to working with outside organizations, to everything in between. For 2021, this is an area association leadership is looking to grow, with personal attention from the Executive Director to ensure we are providing the best possible resources to our members.

