

STATEWIDE REFERENDUM – ACT 2020-91  
MAKING MUNICIPAL FIRE AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES COMPANIES ELIGIBLE FOR LOANS

***Ballot Question***

Do you favor expanding the use of the indebtedness authorized under the referendum for loans to volunteer fire companies, volunteer ambulance services and volunteer rescue squads under 35 PA.C.S. §7378.1 (related to referendum for additional indebtedness) to include loans to municipal fire departments or companies that provide services through paid personnel and emergency medical services companies for the purpose of establishing and modernizing facilities to house apparatus equipment, ambulances and rescue vehicles, and for purchasing apparatus equipment, ambulances and rescue vehicles, protective and communications equipment and any other accessory equipment necessary for the proper performance of the duties of the fire companies and emergency medical services companies?

***PLAIN ENGLISH STATEMENT***

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The purpose of the ballot question is to determine whether Pennsylvania voters authorize making municipal fire departments or companies with paid personnel and emergency medical services companies eligible to apply for loans from an already existing state loan program.

Pennsylvania voters approved the incurring of indebtedness of up to \$100,000,000 in four previous statewide referenda: \$10,000,000 on November 4, 1975; \$15,000,000 on November 3, 1981; \$25,000,000 on November 6, 1990; and \$50,000,000 on November 5, 2002. Originally, this indebtedness funded a loan program for volunteer fire companies, volunteer ambulance services and volunteer rescue squads.

Currently, municipal fire departments or companies with paid personnel and emergency medical services companies are not authorized to apply for loans from this program. The Pennsylvania General Assembly has determined that municipal fire departments or companies with paid personnel and emergency medical services companies are most in need of loans to replace outmoded or unsafe equipment and buildings to meet the increased demands for a higher level of service in the communities they serve. If approved, the referendum will allow municipal fire departments or companies with paid personnel and emergency medical services companies to apply for loans from the program, consistent with the existing law and regulations.

The Office of the State Fire Commissioner administers the loan program, and has promulgated regulations to govern the loan application process. Upon successful application, the Office authorizes loans for the purposes and in amounts specified by the Emergency Management Service Code and the Office's regulations. These loans may be used for establishing or modernizing facilities to house firefighting apparatus equipment, ambulances and rescue vehicles. They may also be used for the purchase of new firefighting apparatus equipment, ambulances and rescue vehicles, protective and communications equipment and any other accessory equipment necessary for the proper performance of these organizations' duties.

This referendum does not authorize incurring any additional debt to fund the loan program; it only expands the class of eligible loan applicants. It also does not expand the purposes for which loans may be made; municipal fire departments or companies with paid personnel and emergency medical services companies may only apply for the type of loans already provided for by law and regulation.