

# COMPLIANCE AUDIT

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## Connoquenessing Volunteer Fireman's Relief Association

Butler County, Pennsylvania

For the Period

January 1, 2018 to December 31, 2021

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March 2022



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
Department of the Auditor General

Timothy L. DeFoor • Auditor General



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**TIMOTHY L. DEFOOR  
AUDITOR GENERAL**

Mr. Adam Rozic, President  
Connoquenessing Volunteer Fireman's  
Relief Association  
Butler County

We have conducted a compliance audit of the Connoquenessing Volunteer Fireman's Relief Association (relief association) for the period January 1, 2018 to December 31, 2021. The audit was conducted pursuant to authority derived from Article VIII, Section 10 of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania; Section 403 of The Fiscal Code, 72 P.S. § 403; and the Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association Act ("VFRA Act"), see 35 Pa.C.S. § 7418.

The objective of the audit was to determine if the relief association complied with applicable state laws, contracts, bylaws, and administrative procedures as they relate to the receipt of state aid and the expenditure of relief association funds. Our audit was limited to the areas related to the objective identified above and was not, nor was it required to be, conducted in accordance with Government Auditing Standards issued by the Comptroller General of the United States.

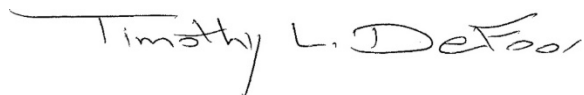
Relief association officers are responsible for establishing and maintaining effective internal controls to provide reasonable assurance that the relief association's administration of state aid and accumulated relief funds complies with applicable state laws, contracts, bylaws, and administrative procedures, including the safeguarding of assets. Relief association officers are responsible for complying with applicable state laws, contracts, bylaws, and administrative procedures. It is our responsibility to perform procedures to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to the extent necessary to satisfy the audit objective. We believe that our audit provides a reasonable basis for our conclusions.

Based on our audit procedures, we conclude that, for the period January 1, 2018 to December 31, 2021, the relief association, in all significant respects, complied with applicable state laws, contracts, bylaws, and administrative procedures as they relate to the receipt of state aid and the expenditure of relief association funds, except as noted in the findings listed below and discussed later in this report.

Finding No. 1 – Unauthorized Expenditure

Finding No. 2 – Inadequate Signatory Authority For The Disbursement Of Funds

The contents of this report were discussed with the management of the relief association, and where appropriate, their responses have been included in the report. We would like to thank the relief association officials for the cooperation extended to us during the conduct of the audit.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Timothy L. DeFoor". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the left of the first letter.

Timothy L. DeFoor  
Auditor General  
March 8, 2022

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## BACKGROUND

Pursuant to Article VIII, Section 10 of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Section 403 of The Fiscal Code<sup>1</sup>, and the Volunteer Firefighters’ Relief Association Act<sup>2</sup> (“VFRA Act”), the Department of the Auditor General’s duty is to audit the accounts and records of every volunteer firefighters’ relief association to determine that funds received under the Foreign Fire Insurance Tax Distribution Law<sup>3</sup> (commonly referred to as Act 205) are properly expended.

The relief association is a charitable organization that was formed primarily to afford financial protection to volunteer firefighters and to encourage individuals to participate in volunteer fire service.

The VFRA Act governs the overall operation of volunteer firefighters’ relief associations. Relief association bylaws define the specific operational procedures by which relief associations conduct business. To fulfill its primary purpose, the VFRA Act authorizes specific types of expenditures and prescribes appropriate volunteer firefighters’ relief association investment options. Within the parameters established by the VFRA Act, it is the responsibility of relief associations to choose investments in a proper and prudent manner.

Volunteer firefighters’ relief associations receive public tax monies, and the association officers therefore have a responsibility to the public to conduct the association’s financial affairs in a businesslike manner and to maintain sufficient financial records to support the propriety of all association transactions. Volunteer firefighters’ relief association officers are also responsible for ensuring that the association operates in accordance with applicable state laws, contracts, bylaws and administrative procedures.

Act 205 sets forth the computation of the Foreign Fire Insurance Tax Distribution paid to each applicable municipality throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The amount of the distribution is based upon the population of each municipality and the market value of real estate within the municipality. Upon receipt of this distribution, the municipality must allocate the funds to the volunteer firefighters’ relief association of the fire service organization or fire service organizations that is or are recognized as providing the service to the municipality.

The relief association was allocated state aid from the following municipalities:

Municipality	County	2018	2019	2020	2021
Connoquenessing Borough	Butler	\$ 3,092	\$ 3,469	\$ 3,532	\$ 3,215
Connoquenessing Township	Butler	\$24,894	\$27,167	\$27,196	\$24,406

<sup>1</sup> 72 P.S. § 403 (as last amended by Act 44 of 2017).

<sup>2</sup> 35 Pa.C.S. § 7411 *et seq.* See specifically, 35 Pa.C.S. § 7418 (amended by Act 91 of 2020).

<sup>3</sup> 53 P.S. § 895.701 *et seq.* (Act 205 of 1984, as amended by Act 119 of 1990).

## BACKGROUND – (Continued)

Based on the relief association’s records, its total cash as of December 31, 2021 was \$201,363, as illustrated below:

Cash	<u>\$ 201,363</u>
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Based on the relief association’s records, its total expenditures for the period January 1, 2018 to December 31, 2021 were \$206,791, as noted below. The accuracy of these expenditures was evaluated as part of the Department’s audit to conclude on the relief association’s compliance with applicable state laws, contracts, bylaws, and administrative procedures as they relate to the receipt of state aid and the expenditure of relief association funds.<sup>4</sup> **The scope of the Department’s audit does not include the issuance of an opinion on the accuracy of these amounts.**

### Expenditures:

Benefit Services:	
Insurance premiums	<u>\$ 15,126</u>
Fire Services:	
Equipment purchased	\$ 146,533
Equipment maintenance	34,314
Training expenses	6,611
Fire prevention materials	<u>1,088</u>
Total Fire Services	<u>\$ 188,546</u>
Administrative Services:	
Other administrative expenses	\$ 2,037
Bond premiums	<u>229</u>
Total Administrative Services	<u>\$ 2,266</u>
Other Expenditures:	
Unauthorized expenditure	<u>\$ 853</u>
Total Expenditures	<u><u>\$ 206,791</u></u>

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<sup>4</sup> Accuracy was evaluated for a selection of transactions based on dollar amount, category, and/or random selection.

## **BACKGROUND – (Continued)**

The volunteer firefighters' relief association and the affiliated fire service organization are separate, legal entities. The relief association is affiliated with the following fire service organization:

Connoquenessing Volunteer Fire Department

CONNOQUENESSING VOLUNTEER FIREMAN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Finding No. 1 – Unauthorized Expenditure**

Condition: The relief association expended \$853 for maintenance on a fire company owned vehicle during the current audit period that is not authorized by the VFRA Act.

Criteria: Section 7416(f) of the VFRA Act states:

The funds of any volunteer firefighters' relief association may be spent:

- (11) To purchase safeguards for preserving life, health and safety of volunteer firefighters to ensure their availability to participate in the volunteer fire service.

Costs associated with maintenance on a fire company owned vehicle does not qualify as an authorized volunteer firefighters' relief association expenditure; consequently, this disbursement is not authorized under the VFRA Act.

Cause: Relief association officials indicated that they were unaware that the expenditure for the maintenance on a fire company owned vehicle was not authorized by the VFRA Act.

Effect: As a result of this improper expenditure, relief association funds were not available for investment purposes or to pay for expenditures authorized by the VFRA Act.

Recommendation: We recommend that the relief association be reimbursed \$853 for the unauthorized expenditure and that relief association officials become familiar with Section 7416(f) of the VFRA Act to aid them in determining the propriety of future expenditures. For further guidance, please refer to the Auditor General's publication, MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATIONS.

Management's Response: Relief association management agreed with the finding as presented at the audit exit conference and indicated they will take action to comply with the recommendation.

Auditor's Conclusion: Compliance will be subject to verification through our next audit.



CONNOQUENESSING VOLUNTEER FIREMAN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Finding No. 2 – Inadequate Signatory Authority For The Disbursement Of Funds**

Condition: During the current audit engagement, we identified 9 checks out of 241 checks drawn on the relief association's checking account that only contained the signature of one officer, even though two signatures are required by the VFRA Act and the relief association bylaws. Issuing checks with the signature of only one relief association officer negates the relief association's internal control over the disbursement process.

Criteria: Section 7415(c)(3) of the VFRA Act states, in part:

The bylaws shall require that the signatures of at least two officers, one of whom shall be the disbursing officer, shall be required to bind the association by formal contract or to issue a negotiable instrument.

In addition, the relief association's bylaws at Article VII, Section 1 states, in part:

The signatures of at least two officer, one of whom shall be the treasurer, shall be required for the issuance of relief association checks, withdrawal from the association saving account, the redemption of any relief association investment or on any other negotiable instrument issued by the association. [*Sic*]

Furthermore, prudent business practice dictates that the relief association has sufficient internal control procedures in place to ensure the signatures of at least two relief association officials are included on all negotiable instruments. Adequate internal control procedures require that checks be signed only after the propriety of the expenditure has been determined and the payee, date, and amount to be paid has been confirmed. Additionally, responsible relief association officers should compare this information with supporting documentation, such as invoices, contracts, etc., prior to approving the checks.

Cause: The relief association officials did not provide a reason for why this occurred.

Effect: As a result of the relief association officer issuing checks with only one signature, assets were placed at greater risk as expenditures were being made without a second relief association officer having the opportunity to verify the propriety of the expenditures. The application of the second signature, after evaluating the propriety of the expenditure, reduces the risk of misappropriation and the risk of errors occurring and going undetected.

CONNOQUENESSING VOLUNTEER FIREMAN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Finding No. 2 – (Continued)**

Recommendation: We recommend that the relief association officials establish adequate internal control procedures to ensure that the signatures of at least two officers, one of whom shall be the Treasurer, are included on all relief association negotiable instruments as defined by the VFRA Act. For further guidance, please refer to the Auditor General's publication, MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATIONS.

Management's Response: Relief association management agreed with the finding as presented at the audit exit conference and indicated they will take action to comply with the recommendation.

Auditor's Conclusion: Compliance will be subject to verification through our next audit.

CONNOQUENESSING VOLUNTEER FIREMAN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

**The Honorable Tom W. Wolf**  
Governor  
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

**Mr. Charles J. McGarvey, Sr.**  
State Fire Commissioner

Connoquenessing Volunteer Fireman's Relief Association Governing Body:

**Mr. Adam Rozic**  
President

**Mr. Ronald Wagner**  
Vice President

**Ms. Alicia Dufford**  
Secretary

**Ms. Tracy St. Clair**  
Treasurer

The following municipalities allocated foreign fire insurance tax monies to this relief association and received a copy of this report:

**Ms. Vicki Forbes**  
Secretary  
Connoquenessing Borough

**Ms. Brenda Davis**  
Secretary  
Connoquenessing Township

CONNOQUENESSING VOLUNTEER FIREMAN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report is a matter of public record and is available online at [www.PaAuditor.gov](http://www.PaAuditor.gov). Media questions about the report can be directed to the Pennsylvania Department of the Auditor General, Office of Communications, 229 Finance Building, Harrisburg, PA 17120; via email to: [news@PaAuditor.gov](mailto:news@PaAuditor.gov).