

LOS ANGELES FIRE DEPARTMENT



JAIME E. MOORE
FIRE CHIEF

August 31, 2026

BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS
FILE NO. 26-050

TO: Board of Fire Commissioners

FROM:  Jaime E. Moore, Fire Chief

SUBJECT: FIREFIGHTER OATH OF OFFICE RESTORATION

FINAL ACTION:	☐ Approved	☐ Approved w/Corrections	☐ Withdrawn
	☐ Denied	☐ Received & Filed	☐ Other

SUMMARY

The Americans United for Separation of Church and State (AUSCS) is a non-profit organization that advocates for disassociation of religion and religious organizations from government. On July 26, 2019, AUSCS mailed the Los Angeles Fire Department (Department) a letter criticizing certain practices it deemed adverse to the Establishment Clause. At that time, the Department determined that the "Firefighter Oath of Office" required modifications in order to be consistent with the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. After reviewing the City's Oath of Office, the Department is recommending language that is more consistent with the language in City of Los Angeles Charter Article II/Section 215, 1999.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board:

Approve the proposed language changes to the "Firefighter Affirmation" and restore it to the "Firefighter Oath of Office."

DISCUSSION

The phrase "I solemnly swear" in an oath of office generally does not conflict with the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment, which prohibits government endorsement or establishment of religion. The phrase "I solemnly swear" is a secular, traditional form of affirmation widely used in official oaths across the United States. It serves as a neutral, non-religious expression of a public servant's commitment to uphold their duties.

Nonetheless, some may argue that "swear" has religious connotations, historically associated with swearing on a Bible or invoking divine witnesses—practices that could be perceived as endorsing religious imagery or practices. To address such concerns, many jurisdictions have adopted secular alternatives, such as "I affirm," instead of "I swear," and have removed religious references like "So help me God." In 2019, the Department replaced "swear" with "affirm" and eliminated the phrase "So help me God" from the oath, renaming it the "Firefighter Affirmation."

The current Oath of Office used by the City of Los Angeles reads: “I do solemnly swear (or affirm, as the case may be) that I will support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of California and the Charter of the City of Los Angeles, and that I will faithfully discharge the duties of the office of (here inserting the name of the office) according to the best of my ability.”

Existing language:

FIREFIGHTER AFFIRMATION

I do solemnly affirm that I will support this Constitution of the United States of America and that of the State of California; that I will obey the Laws and Ordinances of the City of Los Angeles, familiarize myself with and be obedient to the Rules and Regulations and orders of the Los Angeles Fire Department, and faithfully serve the City of Los Angeles in the discharge of my duties as a Firefighter to the best of my knowledge and ability.

Proposed language:

FIREFIGHTER OATH OF OFFICE

I do solemnly **swear (or affirm)** that I will support **the** Constitution of the United States of America and **the Constitution** of the State of California; that I will obey the Laws and Ordinances of the City of Los Angeles, familiarize myself with and be obedient to the Rules and Regulations and orders of the Los Angeles Fire Department, and faithfully serve the City of Los Angeles in the discharge of my duties as a Firefighter to the best of my knowledge and ability.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with this modification.

CONCLUSION

Restoring the act of swearing an oath and restoring the title to Oath of Office aligns with standard practices nationwide and underscores the solemn commitment made by Firefighters upon taking the oath. Therefore, the Department requests that the Board approve the proposed language change.

Board report prepared by Senior Management Analyst I Betty Cornejo, Administration Bureau.