

# California Legislature



**Dave Gillotte**, President Los Angeles County Firefighters Local 1014/Co-Chair, California Fire Service Task Force on Behavioral Health/Vice President, District 7, California Professional Firefighters

President Gillotte is a 35-year fire service veteran who currently serves as a Captain in the Los Angeles County Fire Department. For the last 20 years, Dave has served the communities of Florence/Firestone and Watts via Station 16. These communities have been historically underserved and overlooked. In this area of Los Angeles, the hard-working residents need access to care and services and the firefighters of Station 16 work to support the community each and every day. Dave has served as President of the LA County Firefighters Local 1014 for the last 22 years and has been on the Executive Board of the Local for a total of 26 years.

As President, Gillotte represents more than 3,400 firefighters. Dave also serves on the Executive Board of California Professional Firefighters and is Co-Chair of the California Fire Service Task Force on Behavioral Health (Task Force). The Task Force is made up of representatives from California Professional Firefighters (CPF), the California Fire Chiefs Association (CalChiefs), the California Office of Emergency Services (CalOES), and the California Firefighter Joint Apprenticeship Committee (Cal-JAC).

The purpose of the task force is to identify projects and objectives to assist in behavioral health awareness, treatment, and service delivery to the fire service. Since its inception, the Behavioral Health Task Force has worked hard to break the stigma over mental health and substance abuse in the fire service. Its groundbreaking “Healing Our Own” site ([HealingOurOwn.org](http://HealingOurOwn.org)) has become an essential information hub, with helpful resources and information alongside firefighters telling their own stories of struggle and survival. Gillotte, as a certified peer supporter, has traveled to major incidents

in California and across the country to provide support to his fellow firefighters.

### **California Professional Firefighters; Healing Our Own**

"Healing Our Own" is an initiative focused on addressing the mental health and trauma experienced by firefighters.

Firefighting is one of the most stressful occupations. According to national research, one in three firefighters will develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in their lives, second only to combat soldiers. Firefighters repeatedly endure large workloads, erratic sleep patterns, and exposure to traumatic events. Some effects of PTSD are anger and irritability, sleep problems, depression, substance abuse, and suicidal thoughts. Healing Our Own recognizes the unique circumstances surrounding behavioral health and firefighting, as well as emphasizes that the psychological injuries sustained in the line of duty are as significant as the physical ones. The initiative provides resources and support, underscoring the importance of seeking help and sharing stories among peers who have gone through similar experiences.

According to a survey conducted by the California Professional Firefighters organization and NBC Bay Area, nearly one in six firefighters have considered suicide. The National Fallen Firefighters Foundation estimates that between 100 and 200 firefighters commit suicide each year, double the rate of the general population.

Healing Our Own is part of the California Fire Service Task Force on Behavioral Health, founded in 2016 with the goal of making emotional wellness and PTSD awareness a priority in the fire service. The task force works to establish practices for both crisis prevention and intervention, recommend legislation to support firefighter behavioral health, as well as breaking the stigma around behavioral health issues in the fire service.

The task force has effectively advocated for legislation, such as SB 542. This bill, signed by Governor Newsom in 2019, recognizes that firefighters and certain peace officers diagnosed with PTSD have suffered an industrial injury.

California Professional Firefighters, California Fire Chiefs Association, California Governor's Office of Emergency Services, and the California Firefighter Joint Apprenticeship Committee are all participating representatives in the task force.