Proposal
Recommend that the AFA Leadership to not lobby Command Staff for a 48-96 trial period. There is insufficient data showing a 48-96 is safer than a 24-48.

St. Anthony’s Hospital Study
This research is the biggest source from 48-96 proponents, that the 48-96 reduces fatigue. However, there are few flaws with how this information was gathered. First, this study was conducted on personnel switching to a 48-96 from a Berkley schedule and not from a 24-48. The Berkley schedule is 24on-24off-24on-24off-24on-96off.

Also, what instruments were used for collecting data? Ask anyone with a CPAP machine, what their sleep study was like. We were hooked up to a pulse ox, end tidal, EKG, EEG, and motion sensors. This monitored our sleep quality at baseline and at various levels of interventions. So what tools were used in the St Anthony study to evaluate sleep? A self-reported survey sent in the mail. No medical instruments, not even the basics that we use to gather vital-signs on a refusing patients. The data collected was filled out by each individual and mailed back.

Furthermore, how many firefighters participated in the study? According to the report, surveys were mailed to 314 firefighters in December to track changes in April, July, and August the following year. And how many of those participated? Verbatim from the study, “25% of on-line members submitted sleep diaries for all three time periods.” So essentially, St. Anthony’s research study came to their conclusion without using any medical instruments to monitor sleep quality but formed their conclusion based upon feedback from self-reported surveys of about 80 firefighters. I’m still open to the idea that the 48-96 can reduce fatigue, but I’m going to need to see stronger evidence, before supporting this claim.

LODD
In my research for the two most compelling arguments against the 48-96 are these recommendations from these two NIOSH Reports:

NIOSH Report from June 15, 2015 for cardiac arrest of Fire Engineer during three consecutive 24-hour shifts, recommends: "Recommendation #5: Limit the number of consecutive shifts a fire fighter can work." The investigation concedes that there is no data linking chronic sleep deprivation with sudden cardiac death but still warns that, "Allowing fire fighters to work consecutive shifts may represent not only an injury and illness risk for individual fire fighters, but also a safety and health risk for their coworkers and the public."

NIOSH Report from March 2008 for cardiac arrest of California Lieutenant after working three consecutive 24 hour shifts. "Recommendation #2: Limit the number of consecutive shifts a FF can work." Even though the CDC does not have an official position on firefighter shift schedule, this report still cautions that, "Allowing fire fighters to work consecutive shifts may represent not only an injury and illness risk issue for individual fire fighters, but also a safety and health risk for their coworkers."

Sick Leave Flexibility
Remember, sick-leave accrual rates, remain the same on both shift schedules, but the 24-48 offers more flexibility. Say you’re on a 48-96, you or a family member is not feeling well the morning you go in for work. If you call-in sick, you’re burning 48 hours of sick leave. Under the 24-48, we can call-off sick, and have 3 days to recover, before returning to work. Assuming we accrue 8 shifts (we actually
accrue closer to 7.5) of sick leave per year, you would only have this opportunity 4 times a year on a 48-96 and 8 times on 24-48.

**Home Every Day – Pets**
One of the reasons I applied to join AFD was the 24-48, with a shift change at noon. When I first got in, I was able to take my dogs out the morning I went in. We had enough time to go on a long hike, bathe them, feed them a large meal, fill-up a couple water sources, then go to work. I could comfortably leave them home-alone (with a doggy door) for 24 hours, and feed them a large meal as soon as I got back from work. The 24-48 allowed for me to be home for my dogs every… single… day. Under a 48-96, I would feel obligated to hire a dog-sitter to check-in on my dogs during the 48 hours away from home.

**Home Ever Day – Children**
With a family in the picture, the 24-48 allows for me to be at home every day. For those that may have a family in the future, this is why the 24-48 works best for us: I spend time with my daughter in the morning, while mom gets ready for the day. With a face-time conversation in the evening, I’m back at home the very next day. Next year, my daughter will go to daycare. The plan is for me to drop her off in the morning, mom picks her up at that afternoon, mom drops her off the next morning, I’ll pick her up in the afternoon. I’ll get to see my daughter every, single, day. This is a benefit only afforded under the 24-48 (unless we go to 12-hour shifts) and not the 48-96.

**Swap Trades**
Another benefit of a 24-48 is the ability to “swap” or “flip-flop” trade with the two other shifts. This allows you to do a trade, without either party working a 48-hour shift. You can “swap” shifts with either the shift before or after you to allow you to essentially work a 24-on-24-off-24-on-72-off.

**Trial Drawbacks**
One strong argument of the 48-96, is that the departments that trial it, all vote to keep it. I spoke to the Fire Chief of West Metro about the schedule and asked why that was the case. One of the reasons he stated was that, some people just didn’t want to change schedules again. They adjusted their families to it during the one-year trial and didn’t want to switch it up on them again. I understand how those that are on-the-fence may support this movement, who view this as, “it’s just a trial,” but be aware that trialing it will most likely see an increase in support for the schedule.

**Conclusion**
The 24-48 has worked well for the Austin Fire Department. Applicants apply to this job knowing and desiring the schedule that we work. Until there is sufficient evidence showing that the 48-hour shift is safer for firefighter and safer for the public, there is no need to even consider changing the schedule.

Ed Lee