

NFFE News



Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill Passed, Delivering Vital Resources for Wildland Firefighters

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Late Friday evening, the U.S. House of Representatives passed President Biden’s signature infrastructure package, appropriating \$1.2 trillion to repair and enhance the nation’s transportation, energy, and water systems, among other broad improvements. The bill also includes new resources to protect the country from wildfires, allocating over \$3 billion to revamp the federal wildfire workforce.

Most notably, the infrastructure package includes funding for a 50% increase in base salary or \$20k raise for some federal firefighters, aimed to increase retention at federal agencies and deliver a much-needed pay raise for overworked fire personnel. In addition, a newly established occupational series will be implemented, converting previous Forestry Technicians to Wildland Firefighters, a significant change for which NFFE and wildland firefighters have been advocating.

The bill also allows for conversion of many seasonal firefighters to permanent positions, calls for strategies to minimize exposure to line-of-duty environmental hazards, establishes better mental health programs, and includes resources to help track areas at risk of potential wildfires. In short, the bipartisan infrastructure bill helps federal agencies and firefighters prepare for and combat wildfires, as well as restoration post fire season.

NFFE began implementation discussions with OPM and USDA months ago in anticipation of the bill passing. While the bill language is far from perfect, NFFE is using the full extent of its statutory authority to implement these changes inclusively, fairly, and completely.

“Today, as wildfires intensify throughout the country each year, our wildland firefighters need federal support now more than ever if they are to effectively combat the wildfire crisis,” said NFFE National President Randy Erwin. “Thank you to the Biden-Harris Administration and the members of Congress who worked with NFFE in advocating for our bravest public servants.”

“The infrastructure package provides much-needed resources that will boost morale and help our firefighters to properly carry out their duties,” continued Erwin. This is a significant step in the right direction and NFFE looks forward to collaborating with Congress to supplement this bill with additional legislation to fully fund and fully staff our federal wildfire workforce.”

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