

NFFE News



Senate Approves NDAA for 2022

December 16, 2021

Yesterday, the U.S. Senate voted to pass the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2022. The annual bill includes significant policies and resources for federal employees across the board. Most importantly, the broad defense package improves wages and job security for many civil servants. One new, but essential provision allows for all federal employees to take two weeks of paid parental bereavement leave if necessary.

Further legislative wins include reverting the probationary period for new Department of Defense workers back to a one-year period, undoing the excessive two-year period that was implemented in FY-16. The act prevents cuts to the number of DoD dual-status technicians, and outlaws the involuntary conversions of dual status technicians to active reserve status. This year's NDAA also prevents the use of arbitrary caps on civilian DoD personnel numbers on programs without proper justification, and mandates reporting of whenever active military or contractors are used to fill civilian jobs.

Unfortunately, the 2022 NDAA fell short of what NFFE-IAM had been aggressively lobbying for, and many aspects that would have addressed poor pay and treatment of federal firefighters were not approved in the final legislation. However, the bill does allow federal firefighters, including wildland firefighters, to make budget-neutral shift trades across multiple pay periods, facilitating a better work-life balance. NFFE-IAM is working diligently to ensure that our federal firefighters receive improved wages and programs through future congressional action, including the Build Back Better plan and new legislation.

While the NDAA does not address civilian pay increases, the lack of a competing number in the bill against the president's budget request of 2.7% for calendar year 2022 means that the president can provide the raise via executive order. There is also a possibility that the raise can pass via appropriations laws when they are passed. NFFE-IAM is in discussions with the White House for clarity on 2022 pay raises.

“This year's NDAA had serious potential to make significant improvements in the lives of many federal employees, and in particular federal wildland firefighters. It is disappointing that the final version was watered-down without input from labor,” said NFFE National President Randy Erwin. “Although the bill did not meet our expectations, NFFE-IAM will continue to fight for each of our members and all federal employees in the coming months. Congress owes its dedicated employees what they have earned through serving our country, and we will do everything in our power to ensure they are taken care of.”

www.NFFE.org