



NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES

Affiliated with the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers



NFFE News Release

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Federal Wildland Firefighters Across U.S. to Receive Life-Changing Pay Increase

Washington, D.C. – Today, the National Federation of Federal Employees (NFFE) applauds a Biden Administration announcement that federal wildland firefighters across the country will soon be receiving a long-awaited pay raise authorized in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021. A significant majority of federal wildland firefighters will have their base salary increased by \$20,000 per year, retroactive to October of 2021, the start of the fiscal year. Others will receive an additional 50 percent salary. The initial payments will be disbursed by the end of June, and a second will be made in August, according to the Biden Administration.

“This is incredibly good news for federal wildland firefighters all across the country,” said Randy Erwin, president of NFFE, the union representing a majority of federal wildland firefighters. “There has been a serious recruitment and retention problem for wildland firefighters at federal agencies this year. Firefighters simply could not make ends meet on the hopelessly low salaries offered at federal agencies, so jobs were becoming very difficult to fill. With a worse than normal fire season underway, the inability to recruit and retain firefighters is a very serious problem that threatens communities at risk of wildfire. This announcement is going to go a long way to help federal agencies fill depleted ranks. For wildland firefighters, the additional income will give them the opportunity to pay for housing, childcare, and other everyday necessities. This will be life-changing for thousands of federal wildland firefighters who truly deserve it.”

Last year, when President Biden signed the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act into law, NFFE called on the Biden Administration and congressional leaders to ensure the pay increase went into the pockets of wildland firefighters as quickly as possible. In March, a group of NFFE wildland firefighters took to Capitol Hill to speak with lawmakers and Biden Administration officials to explain how dire the situation has become. Earlier this month, NFFE sent a letter to agency leaders calling on them to use their authority under the infrastructure law to immediately increase pay nationwide.

“I am very pleased to see that the Biden Administration got this decision right,” continued President Erwin. “They did the right thing and implemented this pay increase nationwide and as fast as they could. As a consequence, communities are going to be protected and lives are going to be saved. It really is that simple.”

Although this is an important step in improving federal wildland firefighter pay, there is still more to do to address the issue more permanently. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act authorized the creation of a new wildland firefighter job series that can be used to align the pay scale in the federal government more closely with firefighter pay in other sectors. NFFE has had regular discussions with federal agency leaders on this matter and hopes to complete new job series in the next few months. NFFE is also advocating for long-term funding for federal wildland firefighters, as funding for this pay increase will run out in approximately two years according to budget estimates.

“I look forward to continuing to work with President Biden and agency leaders to see that federal wildland firefighters are properly taken care of for protecting our country from the wildfire crisis, which is showing no signs of slowing down,” continued President Erwin. “The pay raise announced today will make a huge difference for firefighters nationwide, and we are appreciative of everyone within the Biden Administration who worked to make this possible. Our sincere thanks go out to President Joe Biden, USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack, Interior Secretary Deb Haaland, and OPM Director Kiran Ahuja, who all played key roles. Federal wildland firefighters will be able to better carry out their missions and provide for their families because of their leadership.”

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Established in 1917, the National Federation of Federal Employees is America's first union representing civil service federal employees. NFFE represents approximately 110,000 federal employees in 35 departments and agencies government-wide, including 10,000 federal wildland firefighters. NFFE is affiliated with the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, AFL-CIO. For more information, go to www.nffe.org.