

NFFE News



NFFE Files Unfair Labor Practice Charge Against Forest Service Over Wildland Firefighter Work Schedules

March 2, 2023

The National Federation of Federal Employees (NFFE-IAM) has filed an Unfair Labor Practice (ULP) charge against the U.S. Forest Service due to the agency's refusal to bargain over wildland firefighter work schedules. For over a decade, wildland firefighters of NFFE Local 1650 in the Pacific Southwest Region had been working ten hour days, four days per week during the winter months due to less fire activity. In December, management of the Angeles National Forest unilaterally terminated this work schedule and mandated that all employees revert to schedules consisting of eight hour days, five days per week. Management twice declined to bargain with Local 1650 leaders, which prompted the NFFE Headquarters legal team to file a ULP.

"We have been doing 4/10s for the past 15 years," said Local 1650 President Steven Gutierrez. "For us to invoke negotiations, and for management to tell us they're not going to come to the table, it's a drastic shift for our culture. Of everyone in the entire region, on all the forests in California, maybe even the whole Forest Service system, our local is the only one to be forced back to 5/8 schedules."

"The Forest Service needs to provide a better work-home life balance," continued Gutierrez. "We are more productive and morale is higher with a 4/10 schedule during the winter months. That is the least management can do when we are dealing with losing 45 percent of our workforce. People are quitting left and right, and it's not just at the lower levels. There are people who don't have much time left before they retire and they are quitting."

"Wildland firefighters need time to decompress and recuperate after several long, intense months of fighting fires throughout the year," said NFFE National President Randy Erwin. "With the established past practice of working 4/10s in the winter months, it makes zero sense that management would want to force wildland firefighters to fully staff crews when there is little fire activity during the winter. When the Forest Service is struggling to recruit and retain experienced personnel, management should be looking for ways to ease the burden off wildland firefighters who put their lives on the line everyday they show up to work. Forcing them to spend unnecessary hours and money commuting to their posts, while taking valuable time away from them to catch up with their families, is a truly awful approach to scheduling. I look forward to working with our legal team to ensure that 4/10 schedules are restored for the members of Local 1650, and to prevent this scheduling change from happening at other locals across the Forest Service."

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