



NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES

Affiliated with the International Association of Machinists & Aerospace Workers, AFL-CIO

September 20, 2023

Dear Representative:

I write to implore you to make sure Congress takes action by the end of this month (the end of Fiscal Year 2023) to address the looming pay cliff that will reduce federal wildland firefighter pay by 50% up to \$20,000 per firefighter and cripple our ability to contain wildfire in this country.

The National Federation of Federal Employees represents approximately 10,000 federal wildland firefighters nationwide and our members concur with estimates from the U.S. Forest Service that 30 percent to 50 percent of wildland firefighters will leave the federal service if this pay cliff goes into effect. That means we need immediate action from Congress on a permanent pay cliff solution or firefighters will be resigning in droves (in fact, this has already started happening) and there will be woefully insufficient personnel to answer the call when massive wildfires breakout.

Let me make the stakes of inaction from Congress on this matter absolutely clear: Without a pay cliff solution in the next 10 days, communities are going to burn and a lot of innocent lives in this country will be lost.

For these reasons, NFFE strongly urges Congress to **PASS the Wildland Firefighter Paycheck Protection Act (WFPPA), H.R. 5169**. This BIPARTISAN legislation would permanently increase wildland firefighter pay by establishing a new pay scale and additional pay supplement for wildland firefighters.

This legislation enjoys strong BIPARTISAN support in both House and Senate versions (which have identical text). The U.S. Forest Service has also warned Congress about the disastrous risk of not addressing this wildland firefighter pay cliff issue.

Our country is already experiencing a shortage of wildland firefighters nationwide, across all sectors. These firefighters do not want to leave federal service. We believe federal wildland firefighters are the best trained, most cohesive, honorable and committed workforce you will find anywhere. Our federal wildland firefighters have made it clear that they can no longer endure the uncertainty that comes with a pay cliff or only a temporary pay raise. I don't blame them. Many are barely making ends meet now. The WFPPA is a triage bill to stop the mass resignation we know is underway and keep our firefighters in the jobs they love protecting our communities from tragedies like the one we saw just weeks ago in Maui, Hawaii.

Without your action, many federal wildland firefighter paychecks will go back down to a wage of \$15/hr. Firefighters can now find work that pays better in fast food, transportation, or a multitude of other industries. The bottom line is that inaction is a recipe for disaster.

Again, NFFE strongly urges Congress to **PASS the Wildland Firefighter Paycheck Protection Act (WFPPA), H.R. 5169** before the end of Fiscal Year 2023.

Sincerely,

Randy L. Erwin
National President