



# NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES

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

## Updates on Federal Legislation for the U.S. Forest Service

January 2024

U.S. Forest Service Employees and valued NFFE members:

NFFE headquarters staff and local leaders share in your frustration that Congress has not yet passed comprehensive legislation to reform federal wildland firefighter pay and other important issues for employees across the agency. However, we remain confident that Congress will address these critical issues and we continue to advocate on your behalf in Washington, DC every day. Through collective action from you, your coworkers, and other advocacy groups, we can and will pressure Congress to deliver necessary reforms. Below is an update on pertinent legislation affecting the USFS.

Options for Congress to address wildland firefighter pay, both temporarily and permanently:

- **Temporarily Preventing a pay cliff via a Continuing Resolution.** Until Congress passes a full spending bill for 2024, we are relying on continuing resolutions to prevent a pay cliff of 50% of base pay up to \$20,000. The current CR passed last week will fund current pay until March 8, 2024.
- **Permanently preventing a pay cliff through the authorization of the Wildland Firefighter Paycheck Protection Act (WFPPA) (S. 2272 / H.R. 5169).** As you know, this bill would permanently prevent any future pay cliffs. This effort will be led by the Senate, so our focus is on the Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee (HSGAC) and the Energy & Natural Resources Committee (E&R). Now that HSGAC has passed the bill through committee, we need the bill to be voted on by the full Senate before moving on to the House of Representatives.
- **Temporary Appropriations.** Both the House and Senate Interior appropriations for FY 2024 include language to extend current pay levels, but this is only temporary through the end of the year if Congress approves a full spending bill. We still need WFPPA to pass as an authorization to address the Pay Cliff permanently, so we do not have to rely on appropriations bills each year. If WFPPA passes, it will serve as a new base line for WFF salaries, and future annual appropriations will respond accordingly.
- **Hart Act.** In addition, we also need to pass the Tim Hart Act to address a permanent market-based pay fix, and to address other retention, recruitment, working conditions, and work-life wellness issues.
- **Wildland Firefighter Fair Pay Act (S. 3221/ H.R. 6195).** Bipartisan, bicameral legislation to permanently raise the caps on overtime premium pay for federal wildland firefighters.

Agency-wide bills that NFFE is working on:

- **Federal Adjustment of Income Rates (FAIR) Act.** 7.4% pay increase for all federal employees in FY 2025.
- **Federal Retirement Fairness Act.** Would allow former seasonal and temporary federal employees to "buy-back" retirement contributions in order to retire after 30 years of service.
- **Honoring the Civil Servants Killed in the Line of Duty Act.** Would raise benefits for the survivors of a civil servant killed while serving from the current \$10,000 to \$100,000.
- **Locality Pay Equity Act.** Would ensure that Federal Wage System (FWS) geographic pay areas align with the General Schedule (GS) locality pay areas.