

# NFFE News



## NFFE Pens Letter to Forest Service Regarding New Wildland Firefighter Occupational Series

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Today, the National Federation of Federal Employees (NFFE) sent a letter to the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) regarding the agency’s new occupational series for federal wildland firefighters. Addressed to USDA Secretary Vilsack, USFS Chief Moore and Undersecretary Wilkes, the letter lays out the reasons why NFFE is not endorsing the launch of the new occupational series in its current form.

“The Union’s primary goal was to ensure the position descriptions (PDs) are accurate, reflect the modern emergency duties of the positions, and conform to classification standards,” the letter reads. “Management will implement the series using position descriptions we believe remain flawed. As a result, employees who volunteer to opt-in to the new series will still be performing duties without equal pay for substantially equal work in violation of law, rule and regulation.”

For nearly three years, a group of wildland firefighters and NFFE’s Deputy General Counsel engaged with USFS Washington Office officials, who refused to include significant requests of the union team. Specifically, NFFE requested that experienced employees in current positions have the opportunity to review and correct errors to their new PDs, rather than solely rely on outsider review. The union team also requested a career ladder progression up to a Grade 7, for EMT duties to be included and graded in PDs, and for direct involvement of OPM in the development of the new occupational series, among other things. Unfortunately, most of the team’s requests were not agreed to.

“It is disheartening that the Forest Service did not take this opportunity to ensure the new occupational series appropriately reflects the actual duties of federal wildland firefighters,” said NFFE National President Randy Erwin. “Many NFFE leaders spent countless hours during multiple busy fire seasons to work with the Forest Service to get this right. Unfortunately, the agency decided to settle on PDs that remain flawed. Although NFFE recommends that wildland firefighters opt-out of the new series, we will make sure employees have the knowledge needed to navigate the irregularities within the new job series, if they choose to opt-in. Nonetheless, NFFE remains committed to working with Congress to ensure that wildland firefighters are compensated correctly for the duties they carry out in service to the American people.”

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