



NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES, IAMAW, AFL-CIO



NFFE-IAM Supports the Federal Retirement Fairness Act (H.R. 1522)

Position: A strong bipartisan coalition—81 Democrats and 24 Republicans in the 118th Congress—supports the Federal Retirement Fairness Act, a bill that restores the option for federal employees to "buy back" their time spent in temporary or seasonal roles and count it toward retirement eligibility.

Across government, Americans answer the call to serve—many beginning in temporary or seasonal positions. Whether it's wildland firefighters during fire season, park rangers during peak tourism, or civilian personnel supporting military operations, these individuals step into temporary roles to meet urgent national needs. Many later transition into permanent federal positions, building whole careers in public service. Yet their early service goes unrecognized in retirement eligibility calculations.

Despite years of dedication, these employees are barred from counting their prior service time toward retirement—unless Congress acts. The Federal Retirement Fairness Act would fix this inequity by allowing eligible employees to make catch-up retirement contributions (plus interest) to cover their temporary service, just as other federal employees do. This solution is cost-neutral to taxpayers, since employees themselves fund the contributions.

Temporary hiring authorities allow the federal government to quickly scale its workforce to meet shifting demands, such as acquisition surges, disaster response, and infrastructure maintenance. Thousands of dedicated workers who start as temporary employees ultimately become permanent, full-time civil servants.

However, under current law, these workers cannot reach full retirement eligibility unless they work longer than their peers—even if they've already devoted 30+ years of combined service. They face an unfair choice:

- Retire without full benefits, or
- Continue working in physically demanding jobs well past retirement age.

The Solution: Restore Buy-Back Rights

Until 1989, federal workers could buy back temporary or seasonal time by paying their share of retirement contributions plus interest. That authority expired, leaving a gap in the retirement system. The Federal Retirement Fairness Act reinstates this practical and fair option:

1. Allows eligible employees to "buy back" prior temporary service by making standard retirement contributions, plus interest;
2. Enables full retirement eligibility based on actual years served;
3. Imposes no additional burden on taxpayers, as the employee fully covers the cost; and
4. Ensures equal retirement opportunity, regardless of how one began their federal career.

This is a matter of fairness, equity, and respect for public service. The bipartisan Federal Retirement Fairness Act ensures that years worked count as years served—whether permanent or temporary. Congress must restore this basic opportunity for federal employees to retire with dignity and security.