



NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES, IAMAW, AFL-CIO



NFFE-IAM Supports Federal Wildland Firefighters — Pass the Tim Hart Wildland Firefighter Classification and Pay Parity Act (S. 279 / H.R. 743)

Position: Each year, 15,000 federal wildland firefighters (WFFs) from the U.S. Forest Service (USDA) and Bureau of Land Management (DOI) face longer, more dangerous fire seasons. Loss of life and property continues to grow at an alarming rate. Yet for a fraction of the annual wildfire disaster relief cost, the federal government can resolve the growing recruitment, retention, and response capacity crisis—and save lives, property, and taxpayer dollars.

NFFE urges Congress to pass the Tim Hart Wildland Firefighter Classification and Pay Parity Act. This bipartisan legislation delivers sweeping, overdue reforms to pay, working conditions, mental and physical wellness, and retention strategies for federal WFFs.

Modernized Compensation

- **Outdated Pay Structure:** The WFF job series is decades old and fails to reflect current labor markets or cost-of-living. Applicant pools are down by 50%; attrition is at historic highs.
- **Base Pay:** Starting pay is around \$15.00, with a 7-year path (often requiring relocation) to reach \$20/hour. Tim's Act proposes a starting minimum of \$20/hour, with faster promotion potential and added pay for certifications.
- **Fair Pay for Dangerous Work:** WFFs work 18-hour days in remote, high-risk environments. They deserve pay for every hour deployed, Hazard Pay for fuel management and support work, and credit for seasonal work toward retirement.

Strengthening Health and Wellness

- **Mental Health Crisis:** WFFs are 12 times more likely to die by suicide than the national average. Seasonal gaps in employment worsen the mental health crisis. WFFs need year-round access to mental health care, awareness programs, and treatment services.
- **Wellness Monitoring:** Long-term exposure to smoke and chemicals causes cumulative harm. WFFs need preventative medicine and exposure tracking, especially during off-seasons.

Improve Working Conditions and Career Opportunities

- **Substandard Housing:** Firefighters often sleep in cars or unsafe housing with mold, pests, and structural damage. Adequate, healthy lodging is essential for morale and basic dignity.
- **Career Growth and Stability:** Tim's Act provides cross-disciplinary career mobility to reduce burnout, greater access to training without out-of-pocket costs, and automatic conversion to permanent employment by the third fire season

(continues on reverse...)

Fix Retirement Incentives

- **Creditable Service:** Before FERS, seasonal work counted toward retirement. It must again. Seasonal and temporary work is just as dangerous—and essential.
- **Enhanced Annuities:** Premium pay must count toward retirement calculations to provide fair and adequate benefits for high-risk public servants.

The Hart Act's Built-in Offsets Save Taxpayer Dollars

Democrats and Republicans agree that the Hart Act pays for itself. Automatic offsets include:

1. Reduced reliance on overburdened state and local fire services.
2. Protecting taxpayer dollars by curbing reliance on overpriced private contractors whose undertrained personnel often cause more harm than good, wasting tax dollars while compounding the problems they're hired to fix.
3. Lower costs for disaster remediation and FEMA aid.
4. More prescribed burns to prevent catastrophic fires.
5. Restoration of currently idle federal fire assets (engines, crews) because of low staffing.
6. Stabilized staffing levels and less workforce churn to preserve knowledge and expertise.

Investing in federal wildland firefighters is not only the right thing to do—it's also fiscally responsible. Tim's Act delivers immediate benefits to frontline workers, long-term cost savings for the government, and life-saving protection for communities across the country.

Other Important Legislation

Support the Wildland Firefighter Fair Pay Act (S. 3221 / H.R. 6195, 118th)

NFFE urgently calls for the passage of the Wildland Firefighter Fair Pay Act, a bipartisan, bicameral bill raising outdated caps on overtime pay for federal wildland firefighters. These firefighters often exceed the maximum allowable hours for overtime compensation, meaning they are not paid for all their work hours—even during the most intense fire seasons. This means that during peak wildfire months, federal wildland firefighters are performing life-threatening work without pay—solely because of an antiquated statutory pay cap. These public servants deserve fair compensation for every hour they serve on the front lines. Congress must act to fix this injustice. Pass the Wildland Firefighter Fair Pay Act and ensure no firefighter works for free.

Honoring Civil Servants Killed in the Line of Duty Act (H.R. 5883 / S. 3029, 118th)

To raise the death gratuity to \$100,000 and the funeral allowance to \$8,800 from the current \$10,000 payment for survivors of fallen federal workers (updated in 1997) and \$800 funeral allowance (updated in 1966).