



NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES, IAMAW, AFL-CIO



Protecting the Civil Service and Federal Union Rights is in the Public Interest

Position: The 119th Congress must act to defend the apolitical, merit-based federal civil service, uphold collective bargaining rights, and protect the mission of federal agencies. A wave of politically driven policy changes, blanket directives, and efforts to weaken unions is undermining the federal workforce's ability to serve the public effectively. Without action, this erosion will harm service delivery, disrupt federal programs, and reduce agency accountability—impacting every American community.

Federal unions are not obstacles—they are partners in good governance. Protecting the civil service, maintaining collective bargaining, and supporting fair workplace policies are not just workforce issues—they are issues of public trust, democratic accountability, and effective government.

For over 60 years, the federal government has recognized that collective bargaining is in the public interest. This principle, established by President Kennedy's 1962 Executive Order 10988 and codified in the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978, has stood the test of time and partisanship. Federal employee unions do not bargain over pay and benefits (with limited exceptions), but rather over working conditions, workplace safety, and grievance procedures.

Through this process, unions provide a structured channel for employees to collaborate with management, improve operations, implement new technologies, and offer firsthand insight into what agencies need to succeed. They also help agencies remain flexible and responsive while giving Congress valuable perspectives on workforce morale, resource needs, and agency performance.

Legislative Solutions

- 1. Pass the Protecting America's Workforce Act (H.R. 2550)**
Congress must reject any attempt to restrict union rights under the false premise of national security. Instead, lawmakers should affirm that unions enhance government performance and help prevent mismanagement. This is a bipartisan bill.
- 2. Support the Saving the Civil Service Act**
This legislation would prevent any administration from reviving Schedule F or similar schemes that convert apolitical civil service roles into political appointments, undermining due process and public trust. Congress should also monitor attempts to bypass OPM's final rule on upholding merit system principles, finalized April 9, 2024.
- 3. Protect Official Time**
Official Time allows union reps to work with agency managers to resolve issues, improve procedures, and ensure workplace compliance, **not** for internal union business or politics. Weakening it would eliminate a key mechanism for boosting productivity, reducing grievances, and delivering better public service.
- 4. Pass the Federal Labor-Management Partnerships Act (H.R. 7787 / S. 4039, 118th)**
To codify labor-management forums and empower federal employees to partner with agencies for workplace improvements.



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The Fight for American Democracy: Dispelling Popular Lies and Myths about the Federal Workforce

Position: Most Americans are unaware of the actual size and nature of the federal government. Many would be surprised to learn that the number of federal employees has grown very little since the late 1940s—and today stands at the smallest per capita level in modern U.S. history. Unfortunately, some in Congress misrepresent the federal workforce to serve political interests or personal agendas. These false narratives undermine public trust and endanger the systems designed to keep the Executive Branch accountable, transparent, and free from corruption and overreach.

The size of the federal workforce hasn't increased since 1952—and it's never been smaller per capita.

The non-postal civilian federal workforce remains at roughly 2 million employees—essentially the same size as it was in 1952. Yet the U.S. population has more than doubled since then. Today, federal workers comprise just 0.597% of the population, down from 1.85% in the 1940s. Meanwhile, Congress has passed tens of thousands of new laws, mandates, and programs for the Executive Branch to implement—yet has provided no significant increase in staffing to carry out this work. The federal workforce's continuing to meet these demands with the same staffing levels is a triumph of efficiency and dedication, not a failure, proving that DOGE is a harmful disaster.

Firing federal employees and DOGE cuts will NOT save tax dollars. It will cost more in the end.

In fiscal year 2023, the federal government spent approximately \$759 billion on contracts—accounting for roughly 45% of all discretionary spending (out of \$1.7 trillion). That spending supports an estimated 3.7 million federal contract workers. By contrast, in fiscal year 2022 (the latest available), the government spent \$271 billion on 2.1 million federal employees, covering salaries and benefits. This represented about 16% of discretionary spending and 4.4% of total federal outlays. Federal employees pay taxes on their earnings, returning an estimated \$40+ billion annually to the U.S. Treasury, assuming a 15% effective tax rate. This reduces the net cost of the federal workforce to around \$231 billion—or approximately 13.5% of discretionary spending and 3.8% of the total federal budget. Meanwhile, contracting dollars are more likely to generate taxpayer-funded corporate profits, which are not directly reinvested into the Treasury. That makes federal employees more cost-effective and a smarter investment in terms of long-term fiscal responsibility.

The Federal employee termination rate is TWICE that of the general workforce.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey (JOLTS), approximately 1% of the private-sector workforce is involuntarily separated each year. However, only 25–30% of those separations—or roughly 0.25% to 0.3% overall—are due to performance or conduct issues. The rest are predominantly layoffs. In comparison, data from OPM's FedScope shows that the Executive Branch separates approximately 11,500 employees per year for performance or conduct reasons—roughly 0.55% of the 2.1 million federal workforce. That's nearly double the rate of performance-based terminations in the private sector. Yet critics falsely claim that Merit System Principles and federal unions protect poor performers and obstruct accountability. In reality, Merit System Principles and federal unions are a cornerstone of government integrity that protects the system from political abuse, favoritism, and unlawful firings.

The Truth About the MSPB and FLRA and OSC — And the Foolish Effort to Eliminate Them

Federal employees win just 18% of cases at the MSPB, and only 3% on appeal to the full Board. At the FLRA, management prevails in 60% of cases against unions. Yet some in Congress falsely claim these agencies favor employees. The truth? That claim is a lie. And worse, some lawmakers are actively undermining these institutions, blocking funding and qualified nominees to weaken the legal framework that protects the Executive Branch from political interference, retaliation, and corruption.



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NFFE-IAM and the FY 2026 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA)

Position: The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) sets the Department of Defense's annual budget and shapes critical workforce and policy decisions. As the 119th Congress debates the FY 2026 NDAA, NFFE-IAM urges inclusion of the following provisions to support a strong, accountable, and mission-ready civilian defense workforce.

Oppose Cuts and Hiring Freezes to Shrink the Federal Civilian Workforce

Some on Capitol Hill propose slowing or halting hiring to reduce DoD's civilian workforce, but there is no legitimate justification. **The number of civilian employees is already smaller than in 1947**, despite a more than doubled U.S. population and growing global defense commitments. Outsourcing cannot replace the institutional knowledge, oversight, and public accountability federal employees provide. Artificial cuts and caps on hiring threaten mission readiness and national security.

Include the Federal Firefighter Pay Equity Act

This bipartisan bill grants equal retirement benefits for federal firefighters and aligns work schedules with industry standards. Recruitment and retention are becoming increasingly complex, especially at military installations where specialized training is essential. These roles cannot be quickly replaced, so Congress must act to preserve the operational integrity of base firefighting teams.

Block a New Round of BRAC

Another Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) round would eliminate thousands of good jobs, devastate local economies, and cripple warfighter readiness. The 2005 BRAC round exceeded original cost estimates by \$14 billion (GAO-12-709R), with no demonstrated savings. Until a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis is completed, Congress must withhold BRAC authority.

Repeal Discriminatory RIF Authority (Section 1101 of FY 2016 NDAA)

The 2016 NDAA weakened Veterans' Preference and seniority protections during Reductions-in-Force (RIF), replacing them with biased performance metrics. NFFE-IAM supports repealing Section 1101 and restoring fairness to the RIF process, consistent with FY 2022 NDAA language allowing for greater flexibility.

Maintain the A-76 Moratorium

GAO and DoD IG findings support the current ban on A-76 outsourcing. They show that the process is deeply flawed and fails to produce verifiable cost savings. The moratorium must remain in place until a credible, transparent cost analysis is submitted to Congress.



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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.



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NFFE-IAM and the Department of Veterans Affairs – 119th Congress

Position: VA employees and veterans are facing worsening conditions, stagnant pay, and growing political efforts to privatize veterans' care through misinformation and retaliation. Congress must act swiftly to protect what independent studies in 2023 confirmed as one of the “*world’s best healthcare systems.*” Much of the current dysfunction stems from congressional actions that weakened oversight, undermined transparency, and exposed providers and veterans to mismanagement and substandard outsourced care. It’s time to restore accountability and protect the integrity of VA services through a renewed system of checks and balances.

Putting Veterans First Act of 2025 (S. 1068) — This bold, comprehensive legislation prioritizes veterans and military families by safeguarding the VA, its healthcare professionals, and the critical programs and benefits they depend on from political attacks and erosion.

VA Employee Fairness Act—Passed by the House in the 117th Congress, this bill strengthens the VA healthcare system by restoring workplace protections and amplifying the voices of clinicians and patients. It holds managers and political appointees accountable for VA operations and veteran care. Key provisions:

- **Restores peer review systems**, giving VA clinicians and patients greater influence over care decisions.
- **It allows bargaining over workplace practices** affecting patient safety, working conditions, and competitive pay—critical for recruitment and retention.
- **Improves transparency and accountability** by protecting VA professionals from retaliation.

Strengthen VA & VHA Care: Improve Patient Outcomes, Workforce Stability, and System Integrity

Recent laws have failed veterans by replacing sound healthcare policy with political talking points, promoting privatization even when outsourced care is of lower quality. Some lawmakers view veterans as profit centers instead of keeping the promise to care for them. Congress must act:

- **Pass the VA Correct Compensation Act.** Allows Title 38 employees to grieve inaccurate paychecks.
- **Pass the Protecting VA Employees Act.** Reinstates the “substantial evidence” requirement removed under the failed 2017 Accountability Act to restore fairness in disciplinary standards.
- **Remove Section 101 from pending VA bills.** Block attempts to shift VA funding to lower-quality private providers held to less rigorous standards.
- **Shut down the VA Office of Accountability and Whistleblower Protection.** As cited in VA OIG Report #18-04968-249, this politically directed office retaliated against staff, blocked appeals, and obscured care failures, especially from private providers. It must be dismantled.
- **Reform Clinician Pay Structure.** Eliminate broken performance metrics and inconsistent payouts. Strengthen base pay, boost market and specialty pay, and provide automatic COLAs to reflect real market conditions.
- **Support Mental Health Providers.** Combat burnout and turnover amid rising veteran suicide rates. End “bookability” quotas, allow full bargaining rights, expand training, and improve compensation for mental health professionals.
- **Pass the VA CPE Modernization Act.** Update the 30-year-old continuing education caps and expand eligibility to more clinical roles. Modern care demands modern training support.



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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).



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NFFE-IAM and Federal Workforce Legislation - 119th Congress

Position: A strong and modern democracy depends on a fair, effective, transparent, and apolitical federal workforce. To sustain and strengthen that foundation, NFFE-IAM urges the passage of the following legislation to ensure a stable civil service, one capable of meeting the nation's future challenges without undue political interference or fear of retaliation for reporting corruption.

Stop the Illegal and Unethical Workforce Provisions in the 2026 Republican Budget Resolution

- **4.4% FERS for All**—Forcing all federal employees to pay 4.4% into retirement—a 3.3% hike for many—would be a pay cut, compounding the 27% wage gap with the private sector.
- **Extorting New Hires** – New employees are offered lower retirement costs if they forfeit whistleblower rights and lawful protection against corruption. That's not a choice—that's extortion.
- **Cutting First Responders' Pensions** – Ending the FERS Annuity Supplement punishes first responders and others forced to retire before qualifying for Social Security.
- **Slashing Pension Formulas**—Shifting to a high-5 pay calculation will reduce the already inadequate pensions that workers have earned and paid into.
- **Gutting FEHB with Vouchers**—Replacing shared-cost health insurance with unstable vouchers for more expensive healthcare schemes undermines care and raises costs.
- **Illegal Fees on Justice and Unions** – Charging workers for legal help at MSPB, and unions for legally required work at agencies, is unlawful and coercive.

End the Illegal Purge of Federal Workers

Fueled by corruption and deliberate defiance of laws born from centuries of hard-won lessons, the mass firing of federal employees—initiated by the Trump administration and met with silence by Congress—will cripple the nation's ability to defend itself and deliver vital services to the American people. Congress will first answer for its silence and complicity to the American people, long before the White House.

Protect America's Workforce Act - H.R. 2550

This bipartisan legislation aimed at restoring federal workers' lawful collective bargaining rights illegally targeted by President Trump's executive order, which unilaterally ended collective bargaining with federal unions in direct violation of current law.

Saving the Civil Service Act – H.R. 492 / S. 134 - Prohibits Schedule F/PC (political career)-style authorities that would:

1. Install an unlimited number of political operatives without term limits, and
2. Strip the career civil service of lawful protections under the Merit System Principles and Prohibited Personnel Practices, opening the door to corruption and political loyalty threats.

Federal Adjustment of Income Rates (FAIR Act) – H.R. 493 / S. 126

Federal workers earn 27% less than their private sector peers and have lost over 15% in real income over the past decade due to pay freezes and below-inflation increases. The FAIR Act would provide a 4.3% pay raise in 2026 to restore partial fairness.



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NFFE-IAM Supports the Locality Pay Equity Act (H.R. 6422 / S. 3308, 118th)

Position: NFFE-IAM seeks to pass the Locality Pay Equity Act to align the locality pay areas under the antiquated Federal Wage System pay areas to match the General Schedule pay areas.

Fixing Wage Inequality for Federal Blue-Collar Workers

Federal blue-collar pay is governed by the **Federal Wage System (FWS)**, a “prevailing rate” structure meant to align wages with those in the private skilled trades. But the system has **never been allowed to function as intended**. Instead, annual adjustments are capped at the average increase given to white-collar federal employees under the General Schedule (GS).

By law, FWS wages are supposed to match 100% of market rates, unlike GS wages, which target 95% of market comparability. Yet in practice, FWS workers are shortchanged.

The GS system uses Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) data to measure pay gaps, while FWS relies on local surveys conducted by union and agency representatives. These surveys are barred from using local building trades’ union wage scales—limiting the accuracy of the data.

For the past 20 years, Congress has equalized annual raises between salaried and hourly workers by ensuring both receive the same adjustment within each GS locality. However, this only fixes one part of the problem.

GS locality boundaries are based on commuting patterns, accurately reflecting local labor markets. FWS wage areas, by contrast, were drawn in the 1950s, based primarily on the location of military bases.

As a result, many GS localities now contain several FWS wage areas, creating pay disparities for workers doing the same job in the same place. For example, salaried workers at Tobyhanna Army Depot in Monroe County, PA, fall under the New York City locality—consistent with commuting data. However, hourly workers are classified as separate wage groups, despite working side-by-side and commuting the same routes.

This pay disparity is unfair and outdated. The Locality Pay Equity Act would fix this, ensuring that all federal workers in the same local labor market—whether hourly or salaried—are treated equally.