

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 743

To reform and enhance the pay and benefits of Federal wildland firefighters,
and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JANUARY 28, 2025

Mr. NEGUSE (for himself, Mr. HARDER of California, Mr. FITZPATRICK, Ms. PETERSEN, Ms. LOFGREN, Ms. STANSBURY, Ms. HOYLE of Oregon, Ms. BROWNLEY, Mr. BACON, and Mr. LEVIN) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and in addition to the Committees on Natural Resources, and Agriculture, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To reform and enhance the pay and benefits of Federal
wildland firefighters, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; DEFINITIONS; TABLE OF CON-**
4 **TENTS.**

5 (a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the
6 “Tim Hart Wildland Firefighter Classification and Pay
7 Parity Act” or “Tim’s Act”.

1 (b) DEFINITIONS.—In this Act:

2 (1) DIRECTOR.—The term “Director” means
3 the Director of the Office of Personnel Management.

4 (2) FEDERAL WILDLAND FIREFIGHTER.—The
5 term “Federal wildland firefighter” means any tem-
6 porary, seasonal, or permanent position at the De-
7 partment of Agriculture or the Department of the
8 Interior, and Tribal Firefighters, that maintains
9 group, emergency incident management, or fire
10 qualifications, as established annually by the Stand-
11 ards for Wildland Fire Position Qualifications pub-
12 lished by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group,
13 and primarily engages in or supports wildland fire
14 management activities, including forestry and range-
15 land technicians and positions concerning aviation,
16 engineering heavy equipment operations, dispatch, or
17 fire and fuels management.

18 (3) SECRETARIES.—The term “Secretaries”
19 means the Secretary of Agriculture and the Sec-
20 retary of the Interior.

21 (c) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents for
22 this Act is as follows:

- Sec. 1. Short title; definitions; table of contents.
- Sec. 2. Special base rates of pay for wildland firefighters.
- Sec. 3. Wildland fire incident response premium pay.
- Sec. 4. Special limitations on pay for wildland firefighters.
- Sec. 5. Rest and recuperation leave for employees engaged in wildland fire-
fighting.
- Sec. 6. Health provisions.

Sec. 7. Retirement for firefighters.

Sec. 8. Pay parity for Federal structural firefighters.

Sec. 9. Pay adjustments and other matters.

Sec. 10. Wildland Fire Management Casualty Assistance Program.

Sec. 11. Continuing accrual of service for Firefighters.

1 **SEC. 2. SPECIAL BASE RATES OF PAY FOR WILDLAND FIRE-**
2 **FIGHTERS.**

3 (a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter III of chapter 53 of
4 title 5, United States Code, is amended by inserting after
5 section 5332 the following:

6 **“§ 5332a. Special base rates of pay for wildland fire-**
7 **fighters**

8 “(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section—

9 “(1) the term ‘firefighter’ means an employee
10 who—

11 “(A) is a firefighter within the meaning of
12 section 8331(21) or section 8401(14);

13 “(B) in the case of an employee who holds
14 a supervisory or administrative position and is
15 subject to subchapter III of chapter 83, but
16 who does not qualify to be considered a fire-
17 fighter within the meaning of section 8331(21),
18 would otherwise qualify if the employee had
19 transferred directly to that position after serv-
20 ing as a firefighter within the meaning of that
21 section;

22 “(C) in the case of an employee who holds
23 a supervisory or administrative position and is

1 subject to chapter 84, but who does not qualify
2 to be considered a firefighter within the mean-
3 ing of section 8401(14), would otherwise qualify
4 if the employee had transferred directly to that
5 position after performing duties described in
6 section 8401(14)(A) for at least 3 years; or

7 “(D) in the case of an employee who is not
8 subject to subchapter III of chapter 83 or chap-
9 ter 84, holds a position that the Office of Per-
10 sonnel Management determines would satisfy
11 subparagraph (A), (B), or (C) if the employee
12 were subject to subchapter III of chapter 83 or
13 chapter 84;

14 “(2) the term ‘General Schedule base rate’
15 means an annual rate of basic pay established under
16 section 5332 before any additions, such as a locality-
17 based comparability payment under section 5304 or
18 5304a or a special rate supplement under section
19 5305;

20 “(3) the term ‘special base rate’ means an an-
21 nual rate of basic pay payable to a wildland fire-
22 fighter, before any additions or reductions, that re-
23 places the General Schedule base rate otherwise ap-
24 plicable to the wildland firefighter and that is ad-

1 ministered in the same manner as a General Sched-
2 ule base rate; and

3 “(4) the term ‘wildland firefighter’ means any
4 temporary, seasonal, or permanent position at the
5 Department of Agriculture or the Department of the
6 Interior, or Tribal Firefighters, that maintains
7 group, emergency incident management, or fire
8 qualifications, as established annually by the Stand-
9 ards for Wildland Fire Position Qualifications pub-
10 lished by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group,
11 and primarily engages in or supports wildland fire
12 management activities, including forestry and range-
13 land technicians and positions concerning aviation,
14 engineering heavy equipment operations, dispatch,
15 training, development and technology, or fire and
16 fuels management.

17 “(b) SPECIAL BASE RATES OF PAY.—

18 “(1) ENTITLEMENT TO SPECIAL RATE.—Not-
19 withstanding section 5332, a wildland firefighter is
20 entitled to a special base rate at grades 1 through
21 15, which shall—

22 “(A) replace the otherwise applicable Gen-
23 eral Schedule base rate for the wildland fire-
24 fighter;

1 “(B) be basic pay for all purposes, includ-
2 ing the purpose of computing a locality-based
3 comparability payment under section 5304 or
4 5304a; and

5 “(C) be computed as described in para-
6 graph (2) and adjusted at the time of adjust-
7 ments in the General Schedule.

8 “(2) COMPUTATION.—

9 “(A) IN GENERAL.—The special base rate
10 for a wildland firefighter shall be derived by in-
11 creasing the otherwise applicable General
12 Schedule base rate for the wildland firefighter
13 by the following applicable percentage for the
14 grade of the wildland firefighter and rounding
15 the result to the nearest whole dollar:

16 “(i) For GS–1, 42 percent.

17 “(ii) For GS–2, 39 percent.

18 “(iii) For GS–3, 36 percent.

19 “(iv) For GS–4, 33 percent.

20 “(v) For GS–5, 30 percent.

21 “(vi) For GS–6, 27 percent.

22 “(vii) For GS–7, 24 percent.

23 “(viii) For GS–8, 21 percent.

24 “(ix) For GS–9, 18 percent.

25 “(x) For GS–10, 15 percent.

1 “(xi) For GS–11, 12 percent.

2 “(xii) For GS–12, 9 percent.

3 “(xiii) For GS–13, 6 percent.

4 “(xiv) For GS–14, 3 percent.

5 “(xv) For GS–15, 1.5 percent.

6 “(B) HOURLY, DAILY, WEEKLY, OR BI-
7 WEEKLY RATES.—When the special base rate
8 with respect to a wildland firefighter is ex-
9 pressed as an hourly, daily, weekly, or biweekly
10 rate, the special base rate shall be computed
11 from the appropriate annual rate of basic pay
12 derived under subparagraph (A) in accordance
13 with the rules under section 5504(b).”.

14 (b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections
15 for subchapter III of chapter 53 of title 5, United States
16 Code, is amended by inserting after the item relating to
17 section 5332 the following:

“5332a. Special base rates of pay for wildland firefighters.”.

18 (c) PREVAILING RATE EMPLOYEES.—Section 5343
19 of title 5, United States Code, is amended by adding at
20 the end the following:

21 “(g)(1) For a prevailing rate employee described in
22 section 5342(a)(2)(A) who is a wildland firefighter, as de-
23 fined in section 5332a(a), the Secretary of Agriculture or
24 the Secretary of the Interior (as applicable) shall increase
25 the wage rates of that employee by an amount (determined

1 at the sole and exclusive discretion of the applicable Sec-
2 retary after consultation with the other Secretary) that is
3 generally consistent with the percentage increases given
4 to wildland firefighters in the General Schedule under sec-
5 tion 5332a.

6 “(2) An increased wage rate under paragraph (1)
7 shall be basic pay for the same purposes as the wage rate
8 otherwise established under this section.

9 “(3) An increase under this subsection may not cause
10 the wage rate of an employee to increase to a rate that
11 would produce an annualized rate in excess of the annual
12 rate for level IV of the Executive Schedule.”.

13 (d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by
14 this section shall take effect on the first day of the first
15 applicable pay period beginning after the last day of the
16 last pay period for which Federal wildland firefighter tem-
17 porary salary increases were in effect, as originally author-
18 ized under section 40803(d)(4)(B) of the Infrastructure
19 Investment and Jobs Act (16 U.S.C. 6592(d)(4)(B)) and
20 as extended under the Consolidated Appropriations Act,
21 2024 (Public Law 118–42; 138 Stat. 25), the Continuing
22 Appropriations Act, 2025 (division A of Public Law 118–
23 83; 138 Stat. 1524), and the Further Continuing Appro-
24 priations Act, 2025 (division A of Public Law 118–158).

1 **SEC. 3. WILDLAND FIRE INCIDENT RESPONSE PREMIUM**
2 **PAY.**

3 (a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter V of chapter 55 of
4 title 5, United States Code, is amended by inserting after
5 section 5545b the following:

6 **“§ 5545c. Incident response premium pay for employ-**
7 **ees engaged in wildland firefighting**

8 “(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section—

9 “(1) the term ‘appropriate committees of Con-
10 gress’ means—

11 “(A) the Committee on Homeland Security
12 and Governmental Affairs of the Senate;

13 “(B) the Committee on Energy and Nat-
14 ural Resources of the Senate;

15 “(C) the Committee on Agriculture, Nutri-
16 tion, and Forestry of the Senate;

17 “(D) the Committee on Appropriations of
18 the Senate;

19 “(E) the Committee on Oversight and Gov-
20 ernment Reform;

21 “(F) the Committee on Agriculture of the
22 House of Representatives;

23 “(G) the Committee on Natural Resources
24 of the House of Representatives; and

25 “(H) the Committee on Appropriations of
26 the House of Representatives;

1 “(2) the term ‘covered employee’ means an em-
2 ployee of the Forest Service or the Department of
3 the Interior who is—

4 “(A) a wildland firefighter, as defined in
5 section 5332a(a); or

6 “(B) certified by the applicable agency to
7 perform wildland fire incident-related duties
8 during the period that employee is deployed to
9 respond to a qualifying incident;

10 “(3) the term ‘incident response premium pay’
11 means pay to which a covered employee is entitled
12 under subsection (c);

13 “(4) the term ‘prescribed fire incident’ means a
14 wildland fire originating from a planned ignition in
15 accordance with applicable laws, policies, and regula-
16 tions to meet specific objectives;

17 “(5) the term ‘qualifying incident’—

18 “(A) means—

19 “(i) a wildfire incident, a prescribed
20 fire incident, or a severity incident; or

21 “(ii) an incident that the Secretary of
22 Agriculture or the Secretary of the Interior
23 determines is similar in nature to an inci-
24 dent described in clause (i); and

1 “(B) does not include an initial response
2 (including an initial attack fire) in which a
3 wildfire is contained within 36 hours; and

4 “(6) the term ‘severity incident’ means an inci-
5 dent in which a covered employee is pre-positioned
6 in an area in which conditions indicate there is a
7 high risk of wildfires.

8 “(b) ELIGIBILITY.—A covered employee is eligible for
9 incident response premium pay under this section if—

10 “(1) the covered employee is deployed to re-
11 spond to a qualifying incident; and

12 “(2) the deployment described in paragraph (1)
13 is—

14 “(A) outside of the official duty station of
15 the covered employee; or

16 “(B) within the official duty station of the
17 covered employee and the covered employee is
18 assigned to an incident-adjacent fire camp or
19 other designated field location.

20 “(c) ENTITLEMENT TO INCIDENT RESPONSE PRE-
21 MIUM PAY.—

22 “(1) IN GENERAL.—A covered employee who
23 satisfies the conditions under subsection (b) is enti-
24 tled to premium pay for the period in which the cov-

1 ered employee is deployed to respond to the applica-
2 ble qualifying incident.

3 “(2) COMPUTATION.—

4 “(A) FORMULA.—Subject to subpara-
5 graphs (B) and (C), premium pay under para-
6 graph (1) shall be paid to a covered employee
7 at a daily rate of 450 percent of the hourly rate
8 of basic pay of the covered employee for each
9 day that the covered employee satisfies the re-
10 quirements under subsection (b), rounded to
11 the nearest whole cent.

12 “(B) LIMITATION.—Premium pay under
13 this subsection—

14 “(i) with respect to a covered em-
15 ployee for whom the annual rate of basic
16 pay is greater than that for step 10 of GS-
17 10, shall be paid at the daily rate estab-
18 lished under subparagraph (A) for the ap-
19 plicable rate for step 10 of GS-10 (where
20 the applicable rate is the rate in effect in
21 the same locality that is the basis for a lo-
22 cality-based comparability payment payable
23 to the covered employee under section
24 5304); and

1 “(ii) may not be paid to a covered em-
2 ployee in a total amount that exceeds
3 \$9,000 in any calendar year.

4 “(C) ADJUSTMENTS.—

5 “(i) ASSESSMENT.—The Secretary of
6 Agriculture and the Secretary of the Inte-
7 rior shall assess the difference between the
8 average total amount of compensation that
9 was paid to covered employees, by grade,
10 in fiscal years 2023 and 2024.

11 “(ii) REPORT.—Not later than 180
12 days after the date that is 1 year after the
13 effective date of this section, the Secretary
14 of Agriculture and the Secretary of the In-
15 terior shall jointly publish a report on the
16 results of the assessment conducted under
17 clause (i).

18 “(iii) ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS.—
19 After publishing the report required under
20 clause (ii), the Secretary of Agriculture
21 and the Secretary of the Interior, in con-
22 sultation with the Director of the Office of
23 Personnel Management, may, in the sole
24 and exclusive discretion of the Secretaries
25 acting jointly, administratively adjust the

1 amount of premium pay paid under this
2 subsection (or take other administrative
3 action) to ensure that the average annual
4 amount of total compensation paid to cov-
5 ered employees, by grade, is more con-
6 sistent with such amount that was paid to
7 those employees in fiscal year 2023.

8 “(iv) CONGRESSIONAL NOTIFICA-
9 TION.—Not later than 3 days after an ad-
10 justment made, or other administrative ac-
11 tion taken, under clause (iii) becomes final,
12 the Secretary of Agriculture and the Sec-
13 retary of the Interior shall jointly submit
14 to the appropriate committees of Congress
15 a notification regarding that adjustment or
16 other administrative action, as applicable.

17 “(d) TREATMENT OF INCIDENT RESPONSE PREMIUM
18 PAY.—Incident response premium pay under this sec-
19 tion—

20 “(1) is not considered part of the basic pay of
21 a covered employee for any purpose;

22 “(2) may not be considered in determining the
23 lump-sum payment of a covered employee for accu-
24 mulated and accrued annual leave under section
25 5551 or section 5552;

1 “(3) may not be used in determining pay under
2 section 8114;

3 “(4) may not be considered in determining pay
4 for hours of paid leave or other paid time off during
5 which the premium pay is not payable; and

6 “(5) shall be disregarded in determining the
7 minimum wage and overtime pay to which a covered
8 employee is entitled under the Fair Labor Standards
9 Act of 1938 (29 U.S.C. 201 et seq.).”.

10 (b) **ADDITIONAL PREMIUM PAY AMENDMENTS.**—
11 Subchapter V of chapter 55 of title 5, United States Code,
12 is amended—

13 (1) in section 5544—

14 (A) by amending the section heading to
15 read as follows: “**WAGE-BOARD OVERTIME,**
16 **SUNDAY RATES, AND OTHER PREMIUM**
17 **PAY**”; and

18 (B) by adding at the end the following:

19 “(d) A prevailing rate employee described in section
20 5342(a)(2)(A) shall receive incident response premium
21 pay under the same terms and conditions that apply to
22 a covered employee under section 5545c if that em-
23 ployee—

24 “(1) is employed by the Forest Service or the
25 Department of the Interior; and

1 “(2)(A) is a wildland firefighter, as defined in
2 section 5332a(a); or

3 “(B) is certified by the applicable agency to
4 perform wildland fire incident-related duties during
5 the period the employee is deployed to respond to a
6 qualifying incident (as defined in section
7 5545c(a)).”; and

8 (2) in section 5547(a), in the matter preceding
9 paragraph (1), by inserting “5545c,” after
10 “5545a,”.

11 (c) CLERICAL AMENDMENTS.—The table of sections
12 for subchapter V of chapter 55 of title 5, United States
13 Code, is amended—

14 (1) by amending the item relating to section
15 5544 to read as follows:

 “5544. Wage-board overtime, Sunday rates, and other premium pay.”;

16 and

17 (2) by inserting after the item relating to sec-
18 tion 5545b the following:

 “5545c. Incident response premium pay for employees engaged in wildland fire-
 fighting.”.

19 (d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by
20 this section shall take effect on the first day of the first
21 applicable pay period beginning after the last day of the
22 last pay period for which Federal wildland firefighter tem-
23 porary salary increases were in effect, as originally author-

1 ized under section 40803(d)(4)(B) of the Infrastructure
2 Investment and Jobs Act (16 U.S.C. 6592(d)(4)(B)) and
3 as extended under the Consolidated Appropriations Act,
4 2024 (Public Law 118–42; 138 Stat. 25), the Continuing
5 Appropriations Act, 2025 (division A of Public Law 118–
6 83; 138 Stat. 1524), and the Further Continuing Appro-
7 priations Act, 2025 (division A of Public Law 118–158).

8 **SEC. 4. SPECIAL LIMITATIONS ON PAY FOR WILDLAND**
9 **FIREFIGHTERS.**

10 (a) IN GENERAL.—Title 5, United States Code, is
11 amended—

12 (1) by inserting after section 5547 the fol-
13 lowing:

14 **“§ 5547a. Special limitations on premium pay for em-**
15 **ployees engaged in wildland firefighting**

16 “(a) In this section—

17 “(1) the term ‘covered employee’ means an em-
18 ployee of the Forest Service or the Department of
19 the Interior who—

20 “(A) qualifies as a wildland firefighter
21 based on the definitions of ‘firefighter’ and
22 ‘wildland firefighter’ in section 5332a(a); or

23 “(B) is certified by the applicable agency
24 to perform wildland fire incident related duties

1 during the period such employee is assigned to
2 a qualifying incident;

3 “(2) the term ‘covered services’ means services
4 performed by an employee that are determined by
5 the Secretary of the Interior or the Secretary of Ag-
6 riculture, as applicable, to primarily involve emer-
7 gency wildfire suppression activities, including any
8 periods of duty when the employee is sleeping or
9 resting during an extended period of deployment to
10 engage in those activities;

11 “(3) the term ‘emergency wildland fire suppres-
12 sion activities’ means initial-response and extended-
13 response activities that directly relate to suppression
14 of a wildfire, including activities associated with a
15 severity incident but excluding activities associated
16 with a prescribed fire incident (as those terms are
17 defined section 5545c); and

18 “(4) the term ‘premium pay’ means the pre-
19 mium pay paid under the provisions of law cited in
20 section 5547(a), except as otherwise provided in sub-
21 section (h).

22 “(b) Any premium pay earned by a covered employee
23 for covered services shall be disregarded in calculating the
24 aggregate of such employee’s basic pay and premium pay
25 for purposes of applying a limitation under section 5547.

1 “(c) Any premium pay that is disregarded under sub-
2 section (b) shall be disregarded in calculating such em-
3 ployee’s aggregate pay for purposes of applying the limita-
4 tion in section 5307.

5 “(d) Pay that is disregarded under subsection (b)
6 may not be paid to the extent it would cause the aggregate
7 of the employee’s basic pay, premium pay, and hazard pay
8 under section 5545(d) payable in the applicable calendar
9 year to exceed the rate of basic pay payable for a position
10 at level II of the Executive Schedule under section 5313,
11 as in effect at the end of such calendar year. Any premium
12 pay that is subject to a biweekly limitation under section
13 5547(c) must be paid first before other premium pay in
14 applying the level II limitation.

15 “(e) Application of the limit in subsection (d) or sub-
16 section (h) to a covered employee may be waived at the
17 sole and exclusive discretion of the Secretary of the Inte-
18 rior or the Secretary of Agriculture, as applicable. Before
19 authorizing such a waiver for employees of their respective
20 agencies, each Secretary, after consulting with the other
21 Secretary, shall prescribe criteria that will be applied in
22 making a determination to grant a waiver.

23 “(f) Any additional pay resulting from application of
24 this section may not be used in computing a lump-sum

1 payment for accumulated and accrued annual leave under
2 section 5551 or section 5552.

3 “(g) The Departments of the Interior and Agri-
4 culture shall maintain records that document uses of the
5 authority provided by this section.

6 “(h)(1) For prevailing rate employees described in
7 section 5342(a)(2)(A) who meet the requirements in sub-
8 section (a)(1) to qualify as a covered employee, premium
9 pay may not be paid to the extent it would cause the ag-
10 gregate of the employee’s basic pay and premium pay in
11 the applicable calendar year to exceed the rate of basic
12 pay payable for a position at level II of the Executive
13 Schedule under section 5313, as in effect at the end of
14 such calendar year.

15 “(2) For the purposes of this subsection, the term
16 ‘basic pay’ means wages, environmental differential pay,
17 and night shift differential pay, and the term ‘premium
18 pay’ means overtime pay, Sunday premium pay, and holi-
19 day premium pay.”; and

20 (2) in section 5541(2)(xi), by inserting “, sec-
21 tion 5547a(h),” after “section 5544”.

22 (b) CALENDAR YEAR 2025.—For the purpose of ap-
23 plying section 5547 and section 1701 of division B of Pub-
24 lic Law 117–43 (5 U.S.C. 5547 note) in calendar year
25 2025, incident standby premium pay shall be included in

1 premium pay that is subject to the limits established in
2 those sections.

3 (c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by
4 subsection (a) shall take effect on the first day of the first
5 pay period that has a payment date in January 2026. Sub-
6 section (b) shall be effective on the first day of the first
7 applicable pay period beginning on or after October 1,
8 2025.

9 (d) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections
10 for chapter 55 of title 5, United States Code, is further
11 amended by inserting after the item for section 5547 the
12 following new item:

“5547a. Special limitations on premium pay for employees engaged in wildland
firefighting.”.

13 **SEC. 5. REST AND RECUPERATION LEAVE FOR EMPLOYEES**
14 **ENGAGED IN WILDLAND FIREFIGHTING.**

15 (a) IN GENERAL.—Title 5, United States Code, is
16 amended by inserting after section 6329d the following:

17 **“§ 6329e. Rest and recuperation leave for employees**
18 **engaged in wildland firefighting**

19 “(a) In this section—

20 “(1) the term ‘applicable Secretary’ means the
21 Secretary of Agriculture or the Secretary of the In-
22 terior;

1 “(2) the term ‘covered employee’ means an em-
2 ployee of the Forest Service or the Department of
3 the Interior who—

4 “(A) qualifies as a ‘wildland firefighter’
5 based on the definitions of ‘firefighter’ and
6 ‘wildland firefighter’ in section 5332a(a) (apply-
7 ing the definition of ‘employee’ in section
8 6301(2) in lieu of the definition of ‘employee’ in
9 section 5331(a)); or

10 “(B) is certified by the applicable agency
11 to perform wildland fire incident related duties
12 during the period such employee is assigned to
13 a qualifying incident; and

14 “(3) the term ‘qualifying incident’ has the
15 meaning given that term in section 5545c(a)(5).

16 “(b) A covered employee may receive paid rest and
17 recuperation leave following the completion of service
18 under a qualifying incident, subject to policies established
19 at the sole and exclusive discretion of the Secretary of the
20 Agriculture or the Secretary of the Interior, as applicable.
21 Each Secretary shall prescribe such policies after con-
22 sulting with the other Secretary.

23 “(c) Rest and recuperation leave granted under this
24 section shall be used during scheduled hours within the
25 covered employee’s tour of duty established for leave-

1 charging purposes and shall be paid in the same manner
 2 as annual leave. Rest and recuperation leave must be used
 3 immediately after a qualifying incident and may not be
 4 set aside for later use. A covered employee may not receive
 5 any payment for unused rest and recuperation leave.

6 “(d) A covered employee with an intermittent work
 7 schedule shall be excused from duty during the same pe-
 8 riod of time that other covered employees in the same cir-
 9 cumstances are entitled to rest and recuperation leave and
 10 shall receive a payment as if the covered employee with
 11 an intermittent work schedule were entitled to rest and
 12 recuperation leave under subsections (b) and (c).”

13 (b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by
 14 subsection (a) shall be effective on the first day of the
 15 first applicable pay period beginning on or after October
 16 1, 2025.

17 (c) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections
 18 for subchapter II of chapter 63 of title 5, United States
 19 Code, is amended by inserting after the item relating to
 20 section 6329d the following new item:

“6329e. Rest and recuperation leave for employees engaged in wildland fire-
 fighting.”

21 **SEC. 6. HEALTH PROVISIONS.**

22 (a) DATABASE; RECOMMENDATIONS.—Not later than
 23 one year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secre-
 24 taries shall—

1 (1) establish and maintain a publicly accessible,
2 searchable database on a website, to be called the
3 “Federal Wildland Firefighter Cancer and Cardio-
4 vascular Disease Database”, to track chronic disease
5 caused by on-the-job environmental exposure over
6 the lifetimes of current and former Federal wildland
7 firefighters;

8 (2) update such database not less than on a
9 yearly basis; and

10 (3) develop and adhere to recommendations on
11 mitigation strategies to minimize exposure to envi-
12 ronmental hazards for Federal wildland firefighters.

13 (b) MENTAL HEALTH.—

14 (1) MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM.—Not later
15 than January 1, 2026, the Secretaries shall establish
16 and carry out a program for Federal wildland fire-
17 fighters for mental health awareness and support.
18 Such program shall include the following:

19 (A) A mental health awareness campaign.

20 (B) A mental health education and train-
21 ing program that includes an on-boarding cur-
22 riculum.

23 (C) An extensive peer-to-peer mental
24 health support network for Federal wildland
25 firefighters and their immediate family.

1 (D) Expansion of the Critical Incident
2 Stress Management Program, to develop and
3 retain a larger pool of qualified mental health
4 professionals who are familiar with the experi-
5 ences of the emergency response workforce. The
6 Program shall monitor and track mental health
7 in the profession to better understand the scope
8 of the issue and provide ongoing assistance and
9 professional long-term care to patients.

10 (E) Establish and carry out a new and dis-
11 tinct mental health support service specific to
12 Federal wildland firefighters and their imme-
13 diate family, with culturally relevant and trau-
14 ma informed mental health professionals who
15 are readily available, and not subject to any
16 limit on the number of sessions or service pro-
17 vided.

18 (2) MENTAL HEALTH LEAVE.—Each Federal
19 wildland firefighter shall be entitled to 7 consecutive
20 days of leave, without loss or reduction in pay, dur-
21 ing any calendar year. Leave provided under this
22 paragraph shall not—

23 (A) accumulate for use in succeeding
24 years; and

1 (B) be considered to be annual or vacation
2 leave for purposes of section 5551 or 5552 of
3 title 5, United States Code, or for any other
4 purpose.

5 (c) COORDINATION.—In carrying out subsections (a)
6 and (b), the Secretaries may enter into partnerships or
7 cooperative agreements with other Federal agencies, uni-
8 versities, or non-profit institutions.

9 (d) OWCP.—The Office of Workers' Compensation
10 Programs within the Department of Labor shall—

11 (1) recognize post-traumatic stress disorder and
12 psychological stress-related injuries or illnesses cor-
13 related to fire protection, suppression, and incident
14 support activities, and ensure long-term coverage for
15 the duration of the illnesses; and

16 (2) expand the Special Claims Unit to ensure
17 adequate unit staffing levels are sufficient to expe-
18 dite the claims process and shorten response times
19 to wildland firefighter and incident support per-
20 sonnel injured or effected on the job in order to al-
21 leviate the psychological and financial burdens
22 placed on the patient and their families.

23 **SEC. 7. RETIREMENT FOR FIREFIGHTERS.**

24 (a) DEPOSIT SERVICE.—Notwithstanding any other
25 provision of law, any service performed by an individual

1 as a Federal wildland firefighter on or after January 1,
2 1989, for which retirement deductions under chapter 84
3 of title 5, United States Code, have not been made shall
4 be creditable under such chapter, but only if such fire-
5 fighter—

6 (1) submits a written election to the Director;

7 and

8 (2) the deposit requirements of section 8411(f)
9 of such title had been met with respect to such serv-
10 ice.

11 (b) DISABILITY ANNUITY.—Beginning on the date of
12 enactment of this Act, any Federal wildland firefighter
13 who suffers from a disease described in section
14 8143b(b)(2) of title 5, United States Code, due to environ-
15 mental job-related exposure, including smoke inhalation,
16 silicate inhalation, and firefighting toxic exposure, shall be
17 considered to be disabled for purposes of section 8451 of
18 such title. Such section 8451 shall be applied to any such
19 firefighter by substituting “12 months” for “18 months”.

20 (c) INCLUDING OVERTIME AS BASIC PAY.—Section
21 8331(3) of title 5, United States Code, is amended—

22 (1) in subparagraph (H), by striking “and” at
23 the end;

24 (2) in subparagraph (I), by inserting “and”
25 after the semicolon;

1 vided for Federal wildland firefighters under this Act and
2 the amendments made by this Act. Not later than 1 year
3 after the date the pay scale is established under section
4 5332a of title 5, United States Code, as added by section
5 2 of this Act, the Director shall submit a report to Con-
6 gress on whether pay for such Federal structural fire-
7 fighters is competitive with Federal wildland firefighters.

8 (b) FEDERAL STRUCTURAL FIREFIGHTER DE-
9 FINED.—In this section, the term “Federal structural fire-
10 fighter”—

11 (1) has the meaning given the term “fire-
12 fighter” in section 8401 of chapter 84 of title 5,
13 United States Code; and

14 (2) does not include any Federal wildland fire-
15 fighter.

16 **SEC. 9. PAY ADJUSTMENTS AND OTHER MATTERS.**

17 (a) ANNUAL ADJUSTMENTS.—Notwithstanding any
18 other provision of law, beginning in the first pay period
19 beginning on or after the date that the pay scale is estab-
20 lished under section 5332a of title 5, United States Code,
21 as added by section 2 of this Act, and annually thereafter,
22 the basic rate of pay for each Federal wildland firefighter
23 occupying a position within such pay scale shall be in-
24 creased by not less than the percentage equal to the per-
25 cent change in the Consumer Price Index (all items—

1 United States city average), published monthly by the Bu-
2 reau of Labor Statistics, for December of the preceding
3 year over such Consumer Price Index for the December
4 of the year prior to the preceding year, adjusted to the
5 nearest one-tenth of 1 percent.

6 (b) COMPENSATION COMPARABLE TO NON-FEDERAL
7 FIREFIGHTERS.—Not later than 1 year after the date the
8 pay scale is established under section 5332a of title 5,
9 United States Code, as added by section 2 of this Act,
10 the Secretaries shall submit a report to Congress on
11 whether pay, benefits, and bonuses provided to Federal
12 wildland firefighters are comparable to the pay, benefits,
13 and bonuses provided for non-Federal firefighters in the
14 State or locality where Federal wildland firefighters are
15 based.

16 (c) HAZARDOUS DUTY PAY.—Each Federal wildland
17 firefighter carrying out work completed during prescribed
18 fire, parachuting, tree climbing over 20 feet, hazard tree
19 removal, and other hazardous work as identified by the
20 Secretaries, shall be entitled to be paid the appropriate
21 differential under section 5545(d) of title 5, United States
22 Code, as if such employee was covered by such section.
23 The Director may prescribe regulations to carry out this
24 subsection.

25 (d) OTHER MATTERS.—

1 (1) RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION BONUS.—

2 In order to promote the recruitment and retention of
3 Federal wildland firefighters, the Director, in coordi-
4 nation with the Secretaries, shall establish a pro-
5 gram under which a recruitment or retention bonus
6 of not less than \$1,000 may be paid to a Federal
7 wildland firefighter in an amount as determined ap-
8 propriate by the Director and the Secretaries. The
9 minimum amount of such bonus in the previous sen-
10 tence shall be increased each year by the Consumer
11 Price Index in the manner prescribed under sub-
12 section (a). Any bonus under this subsection—

13 (A) shall be paid to any primary or sec-
14 ondary Federal wildland firefighter upon the
15 date that such firefighter successfully completes
16 a work capacity test; and

17 (B) may not be paid to any such fire-
18 fighter more than once per calendar year.

19 (2) HOUSING ALLOWANCE.—The Secretaries
20 shall provide a housing allowance to any Federal
21 wildland firefighter deployed to a location more than
22 50 miles from their primary residence. Such allow-
23 ance shall be in an amount determined appropriate
24 by the Secretaries and adjusted based on the cost of
25 housing in the area of deployment.

1 (3) CAREER TRANSITION.—

2 (A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year
3 after the date of enactment of this Act, the Sec-
4 retaries shall establish, maintain, coordinate,
5 and operate a voluntary tuition assistance pro-
6 gram for Federal wildland firefighters occu-
7 pying a permanent position that encompass a
8 broad range of educational experiences (either
9 in-person or through distance-learning), includ-
10 ing academic skills development, vocational pro-
11 grams, career and technical programs, and pro-
12 grams leading to the award of undergraduate
13 and graduate degrees.

14 (B) AMOUNT.—The program under sub-
15 paragraph (A) shall provide, not more than
16 once during each calendar year, a payment of
17 not less than \$4,000 to each Federal wildland
18 firefighter who elects to participate in the pro-
19 gram.

20 (C) REVIEW.—The Secretaries shall con-
21 duct an annual review of whether the amount
22 provided under subparagraph (B) is adequate,
23 in consideration of inflation and other effects.

1 **SEC. 10. WILDLAND FIRE MANAGEMENT CASUALTY ASSIST-**
2 **ANCE PROGRAM.**

3 (a) DEVELOPMENT OF PROGRAM.—Not later than 6
4 months after the date of the enactment of this Act, the
5 Secretary of the Interior shall develop a Wildland Fire
6 Management Casualty Assistance Program (referred to in
7 this section as the “Program”) to provide assistance to
8 the next-of-kin of—

9 (1) firefighters who, while in the line of duty,
10 suffer illness or are critically injured or killed; and

11 (2) wildland fire support personnel critically in-
12 jured or killed in the line of duty.

13 (b) ASPECTS OF PROGRAM.—The Program shall ad-
14 dress the following:

15 (1) The initial and any subsequent notifications
16 to the next-of-kin of a firefighter or wildland fire
17 support personnel who—

18 (A) is killed in the line of duty; or

19 (B) requires hospitalization or treatment
20 at a medical facility due to a line-of-duty injury
21 or illness.

22 (2) The reimbursement of next-of-kin for ex-
23 penses associated with travel to visit a firefighter or
24 wildland fire support personnel who—

25 (A) is killed in the line of duty; or

1 (B) requires hospitalization or treatment
2 at a medical facility due to a line-of-duty injury
3 or illness.

4 (3) The qualifications, assignment, training, du-
5 ties, supervision, and accountability for the perform-
6 ance of casualty assistance responsibilities.

7 (4) The relief or transfer of casualty assistance
8 officers, including notification to survivors of critical
9 injury or illness in the line of duty and next-of-kin
10 of the reassignment of such officers to other duties.

11 (5) Centralized, short-term and long-term case
12 management procedures for casualty assistance, in-
13 cluding rapid access by survivors of firefighters or
14 wildland fire support personnel and casualty assist-
15 ance officers to expert case managers and coun-
16 selors.

17 (6) The provision, through a computer acces-
18 sible website and other means and at no cost to sur-
19 vivors and next-of-kin of firefighters or wildland fire
20 support personnel, of personalized, integrated infor-
21 mation on the benefits and financial assistance avail-
22 able to such survivors from the Federal Government.

23 (7) The provision of information to survivors
24 and next-of-kin of firefighters or wildland fire sup-
25 port personnel on mechanisms for registering com-

1 plaints about, or requests for, additional assistance
2 related to casualty assistance.

3 (8) Liaison with the Department of the Inte-
4 rior, the Department of Justice, and the Social Se-
5 curity Administration to ensure prompt and accurate
6 resolution of issues relating to benefits administered
7 by those agencies for survivors of firefighters or
8 wildland fire support personnel.

9 (9) Data collection, in consultation with the
10 United States Fire Administration and the National
11 Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, re-
12 garding the incidence and quality of casualty assist-
13 ance provided to survivors of firefighters or wildland
14 fire support personnel.

15 (c) LINE OF DUTY DEATH BENEFITS.—The Pro-
16 gram shall not affect existing authorities for Line of Duty
17 Death benefits for Federal firefighters and wildland fire
18 support personnel.

19 (d) NEXT-OF-KIN DEFINED.—In this section, the
20 term “next-of-kin” means person or persons in the highest
21 category of priority as determined by the following list
22 (categories appear in descending order of priority):

23 (1) Surviving legal spouse.

1 (2) Children (whether by current or prior mar-
2 riage) age 18 years or older in descending prece-
3 dence by age.

4 (3) Father or mother, unless by court order
5 custody has been vested in another (adoptive parent
6 takes precedence over natural parent);

7 (4) Siblings (whole or half) age 18 years or
8 older in descending precedence by age.

9 (5) Grandfather or grandmother.

10 (6) Any other relative (precedence to be deter-
11 mined in accordance with the civil law of descent of
12 the deceased former member's State of domicile at
13 time of death).

14 **SEC. 11. CONTINUING ACCRUAL OF SERVICE FOR FIRE-**
15 **FIGHTERS.**

16 (a) FEDERAL EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM.—
17 Section 8401(14) of title 5, United States Code, is amend-
18 ed to read as follows:

19 “(14) the term ‘firefighter’ means—

20 “(A) an employee, the duties of whose po-
21 sition—

22 “(i) are primarily to perform work di-
23 rectly connected with the control and extin-
24 guishment of non-wildland fires; and

1 “(ii) are sufficiently rigorous that em-
2 ployment opportunities should be limited to
3 young and physically vigorous individuals,
4 as determined by the Director considering
5 the recommendations of the employing
6 agency;

7 “(B) an employee, the duties of whose po-
8 sition—

9 “(i) are primarily to perform work di-
10 rectly connected with the control and extin-
11 quishment of wildland fires; and

12 “(ii) are sufficiently rigorous that em-
13 ployment opportunities should be limited to
14 young and physically vigorous individuals,
15 as determined by the Director considering
16 the recommendations of the employing
17 agency;

18 “(C) an employee who—

19 “(i) is transferred directly to a super-
20 visory or administrative position after per-
21 forming duties described in subparagraph
22 (A) for at least 3 years; and

23 “(ii) while serving in such supervisory
24 or administrative position, has no break in
25 service; or

1 “(D) an employee who—

2 “(i) occupies a supervisory or admin-
3 istrative position after performing duties
4 described in subparagraph (B) for not less
5 than 3 years; and

6 “(ii) has not more than 24 months in
7 total time of breaks in service;”.

8 (b) SERVICE BEFORE DATE OF ENACTMENT.—

9 (1) IN GENERAL.—Subject to the requirements
10 under paragraph (2), service performed before the
11 date of enactment of this Act by an individual who,
12 on the date of enactment of this Act, is an employee
13 (as defined in section 8401(11) of title 5, United
14 States Code) shall, for the purposes of chapter 84 of
15 title 5, United States Code, be treated as service
16 performed by a firefighter if—

17 (A) such service was performed during the
18 period beginning on October 1, 2003, and end-
19 ing on the day before the date of enactment of
20 this Act;

21 (B) at the time of performing such serv-
22 ice—

23 (i) the individual did not meet the re-
24 quirements to be a firefighter under sec-

1 tion 8401(14) of title 5, United States
2 Code, because of a break in service; and

3 (ii) would have met the requirements
4 to be a firefighter under section
5 8401(14)(D) of title 5, United States
6 Code, as amended by this Act; and

7 (C) appropriate deductions and
8 withholdings under sections 8422 and 8423 of
9 title 5, United States Code, were made during
10 such service.

11 (2) CREDIT FOR SERVICE.—To receive credit
12 for eligible service under paragraph (1), the applica-
13 ble individual shall—

14 (A) before the date on which the individual
15 separates from service in the agency in which
16 the individual holds a position on the date of
17 enactment of this Act, submit a written election
18 to the agency employing the individual;

19 (B) if the individual is not employed by the
20 agency that employed the individual when the
21 service described in paragraph (1) was per-
22 formed, submit a written election to such agen-
23 cy; and

24 (C) remit to the agency that employed the
25 individual when such service was performed the

1 additional amount that would have been de-
2 ducted during the period of prior service under
3 section 8422 of title 5, United States Code,
4 from the pay of the individual if the amend-
5 ments made by subsection (a) had been in ef-
6 fect during the prior service, plus any applicable
7 interest computed under section 8334(e) of title
8 5, United States Code.

9 (3) GOVERNMENT CONTRIBUTIONS.—If an indi-
10 vidual remits payment under paragraph (2)(C) with
11 respect to service described in paragraph (1), the
12 agency that employed the individual when such serv-
13 ice was performed shall remit to the Office of Per-
14 sonnel Management (for deposit in the Treasury of
15 the United States to the credit of the Civil Service
16 Retirement and Disability Fund) the total additional
17 amount of Federal contributions that would have
18 been paid under section 8423 of title 5, United
19 States Code, if the amendments made by subsection
20 (a) had been in effect during the prior service, plus
21 any applicable interest computed in accordance with
22 section 8334(e) of title 5, United States Code.

23 (4) NOTIFICATION AND ASSISTANCE REQUIRE-
24 MENTS.—The Director of the Office of Personnel
25 Management shall—

1 (A) take such action as may be necessary
2 and appropriate to inform individuals entitled
3 to have any service credited under this sub-
4 section, or to have any annuity computed under
5 this subsection, of the entitlement to the credit
6 or computation; and

7 (B) upon request, assist any individual de-
8 scribed in subparagraph (A) in obtaining such
9 information in the possession of the Secretary
10 of Agriculture or the Secretary of the Interior,
11 as applicable, as may be necessary to verify the
12 entitlement of the individual to have any service
13 credited, or to have any annuity computed, pur-
14 suant to this subsection.

15 (5) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this
16 section shall be construed to permit or require the
17 making of any contribution to the Thrift Savings
18 Fund that would not otherwise have been permitted
19 or required but for the enactment of this section.

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