

March 3, 2021

Sent via e-mail

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association (NARFE), which is dedicated to advancing the interests of the more than 5 million federal and postal employees and retirees, as well as their spouses and survivors, I write to express support for several provisions of H.R. 1319, the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.

Specifically, I write to express support for:

- Establishing a presumption of eligibility for workers' compensation for federal and postal employees who are required by their job to come into contact with patients, members of the public or coworkers, and are subsequently unable to work due to a COVID-19 infection. Frontline federal and postal workers have been putting themselves at increased risk of COVID-19 infection, and many have and will continue to contract the disease as a result. Without a presumption of eligibility, infected workers will find it difficult to prove that they contracted the disease while on-duty and as such, they could be denied workers' compensation benefits in connection with their COVID-19 infection, even though it is likely they contracted the disease while working.
- Providing emergency sick and family leave to federal and postal workers unable to work due to circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic: if they are combatting COVID-19, or forced to quarantine or isolate as a result of exposure to coronavirus; if they must care for a child whose school or place of care has been closed or is conducting virtual learning; or if they must care for a family member incapable of self-care whose care provider is unavailable due to COVID. Most federal workers were not eligible for emergency family leave provisions made available to much of the public through the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA), yet they have faced the same trying circumstances of simultaneously working from home and caring for children and family members. Furthermore, FFCRA sick and family leave provisions expired at the end of 2020. The emergency paid leave provisions provide critical financial protections for employees unable to work due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The emergency sick leave provisions also limit the financial incentive for sick or exposed workers to risk coming or returning to work when doing so could risk further spread of the coronavirus.
- Extending eligibility for the Paycheck Protection Program to all 501(c) nonprofit organizations, including 501(c)(5)s such as NARFE. 501(c)(5)s provide valuable information to their members. Notably, NARFE provides both federal workers and retirees with the clear, reliable and accessible counsel to navigate the unique

and complex issues related to their benefits. 501(c)(5)s like NARFE, which are no more immune to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic than other nonprofits, should be eligible for relief just as other nonprofits have been eligible.

Federal and postal workers have made outstanding contributions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and have faced substantially increased risks to perform their duties. As a result, more than 100,000 federal employees serving this country have tested positive for the coronavirus.¹ At the Department of Veterans Affairs, doctors and nurses have cared for tens of thousands of individuals with COVID-19 amid shortages of personal protective equipment. Both the Internal Revenue Service and the Small Business Administration have distributed hundreds of billions of dollars to businesses and individuals at record speeds in response to pandemic-related economic crises. Postal workers ensure that the nation remains connected and that individuals quarantining or isolating in response to COVID-19 receive goods and communications without leaving their home. Civil servants continue to spearhead the federal response, from tracking new strains of the virus to facilitating vaccine distribution. Countless more federal workers continue to serve the nation through remote work, maintaining government operations amid difficult circumstances.

We ought to recognize and honor their service by taking care of those who fall ill with COVID-19 by allowing emergency sick and family leave to allow them to take care of themselves and their family, and by allowing relief for organizations that support them, such as NARFE and others.

Thank you for the consideration of our views. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact John Hatton, NARFE's Senior Director for Legislative and Political Affairs, at jhatton@narfe.org

Sincerely,



Ken Thomas
National President

¹ Katz, Eric. "Coronavirus Cases Are Spiking At Federal Agencies." *Government Executive*, November 13, 2020, <https://www.govexec.com/workforce/2020/11/coronavirus-cases-are-spiking-federal-agencies/170010/>.