

April 20, 2022

House Committee on Education and Labor  
2176 Rayburn HOB  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Scott:

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 employees and retirees, as well as their spouses and survivors, I write to express support for H.R. 2499, the Federal Firefighters Fairness Act of 2021.

H.R. 2499 would create a presumption of occupational illness for federal firefighters, covering ailments like cardiovascular disease, cancers and certain infectious diseases that 49 states already presume to be work-related for their state and local firefighters. Passing this bill would bring federal rules in line with the vast majority of states in recognizing the occupational danger placed on firefighters and solve an inequity placed on the brave men and women who choose this line of work.

Federal firefighters face an onerous process to address their occupationally derived illnesses. The current system requires them to go through the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP) and prove that their disease is connected to a specific event and carcinogenic exposure. This is a burdensome and time-consuming task that fails to account for the numerous toxic exposures firefighters regularly encounter. To make matters worse, OWCP has a lengthy review process, upwards of 10 months, that delays employee compensation and medical treatment.

Federal firefighters operate in some of the most hazardous environments in the federal service. They respond to threats at military installations, federal research laboratories, veterans' hospitals and other federal sites across the country, and they are exposed to high levels of smoke, heat, stress and toxic elements. The current system fails to adequately take these consistent exposures into account, and it's time for Congress to end this unfair practice. We owe it to them to correct this wrong.

Thank you for advancing this bill out of committee and for your consideration of our views. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact NARFE's Staff Vice President for Policy and Programs John Hatton at [jhatton@narfe.org](mailto:jhatton@narfe.org).

Sincerely,



Ken Thomas  
NARFE National President