

May 11, 2022

Committee on Oversight and Reform
2157 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Maloney, Ranking Member Comer, and members of the House Committee on Oversight and Reform:

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 our support for H.R. 521, the First Responder Fair RETIRE Act, and H.R. 6104, the Building the Next Generation of Federal Employees Act, and ask that the committee favorably report these bills.

The First Responder Fair RETIRE Act honors the service of federal public safety employees who suffer from a disabling injury or illness in performance of their job and helps mitigate the severe disruption placed on their lives as a result. Current law requires federal public safety employees to pay a higher percentage of their pay toward their annuity to retire after 20 years of service at age 50, or after 25 years of service at any age, with mandatory separation from service at age 57. However, should a public safety employee be prevented from continuing their job because of a work-related disability, they are no longer eligible to retire under the same system, upending years of service to this nation and responsible planning for the future. H.R. 521 corrects this unfair situation by allowing affected workers to remain in the public safety retirement system should they choose to continue their federal service outside that system. These employees should not have to face additional hardship for sacrifices made for this nation, and I urge all members to support this bill.

NARFE also supports the Building the Next Generation of Federal Employees Act, which will help revitalize federal internship programs and create a crucial pipeline of talent to federal service. The bill would create a Federal Fellowship and Scholarship Center, reinvigorate the Pathways Program, and build an online internship platform to tap into a new generation of federal workers and connect qualified individuals with federal agencies. The legislation would also help convert interns into full-time federal employees by giving individuals who successfully complete a qualified federal internship a boost in the competitive hiring process. Those who show an interest and aptitude for public service and have successfully completed all required aspects of a qualified federal internship deserve to have that experience work in their favor. This aspect of the legislation will increase the likelihood of hiring qualified and public-service-oriented individuals, without undermining the intention of other hiring preferences or the merit systems process. The federal government needs a steady stream of talented individuals to serve this nation, and this bill aids that effort.

For these reasons, I urge all members of the committee to support these bills. Thank you 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.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ken Thomas', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ken Thomas
NARFE National President