



NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES

Affiliated with the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers



NFFE News Article

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Senate Democrats Introduce Bill to Provide Back Pay in Event of Government Shutdown

The National Federation of Federal Employees supports the legislation of S. 861, titled The Federal Employee Fair Treatment Act. Introduced last week on Wednesday by Sen. Ben Cardin (D-MD), the act will guarantee back pay for federal employees in the event of a possible government shutdown. If successful, the legislation will account for all federal employees, regardless of whether they are forced to work during the potential closure or if they are furloughed. However, current funding is set to expire on April 26, and Congress will be adjourned until April 22 due to Easter break, giving lawmakers just four days to pass the bill.

The situation is comparable to the shutdown in 2013, in which the government was closed for 16 days, nearly causing approximately 800,000 non-exempt federal employees to be placed on indefinite unpaid leave. However, the house unanimously passed a bill to provide back pay to these workers after the government closure was resolved, as S. 861 will do if passed. As in 2013, agencies are required to compensate employees that are considered essential to the protection of life and property, but furloughed workers do not receive these same protections.

“Our bill is the right thing to do and the fair thing to do,” Cardin affirmed. “Federal workers are dedicated public servants who simply want to do their jobs on behalf of the American people. They shouldn’t suffer because of extreme partisan gamesmanship.”

The bill also would allow for employees exempted from furloughs to use paid leave as they normally would during normal governmental operations. The legislation emphasizes that back pay be issued as quickly and efficiently as possible following the shutdown, if it occurs. Fortunately, it appears that both Republicans and Democrats are working together to prevent a closure, although they will have limited time to do so. NFFE is encouraging all to request their Senators vote “yes” on S. 861, so that federal employees are not unfairly harmed by the deficiencies of Congress.