



National Federation of Federal Employees, IAMAW, AFL-CIO



Support the Domestic Partnership Benefits and Obligations Act (H.R. 2517/S. 1102)

Position:

Under current law, domestic partners of federal employees are not eligible to receive insurance, family leave, survivor annuities, and other benefits for which spouses are eligible. Since benefits comprise a great deal of federal employee compensation, this disparity effectively denies federal employees with domestic partners equal pay for equal work. The Domestic Partnership Benefits and Obligations Act (H.R. 2517/S. 1102) would make same sex domestic partners eligible for these benefits. Similar domestic partner benefits are already being offered by numerous state and local governments and in many workplaces in the private sector. NFFE-IAM strongly supports this legislation.

Background:

The Domestic Partnership Benefits and Obligations Act of 2009 would give the domestic partners of federal employees the same benefits – and require of them the same obligations – as the spouses of federal employees. Under the legislation, same-sex domestic partners of federal employees living together in a committed relationship would be eligible for health benefits, long-term care, Family and Medical Leave, and federal retirement benefits, among others. The domestic partners of federal employees would also be subject to the same responsibilities that apply to the spouses of federal employees, such as anti-nepotism rules and financial disclosure requirements.

According to UCLA's Williams Institute, over 30,000 federal workers live in committed relationships with same-sex domestic partners who are not federal employees. Since benefits comprise a great deal of federal employee compensation, this disparity effectively denies federal employees with domestic partners equal pay for equal work.

Offering domestic partner benefits has become a very common practice in all sectors of employment. More than half of all Fortune 500 companies and over 10,000 other private sector companies provide benefits to domestic partners. In addition, the governments of 13 states, 145 local jurisdictions, and over 300 colleges and universities provide similar domestic partner benefits.

Following the passage of this legislation, federal employees would have the right to file an affidavit of eligibility with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to extend these benefits and obligations to their partners. A broad group of bipartisan lawmakers in both houses of Congress have cosponsored this legislation.

Not only would this legislation further advance an agenda of fairness and equality within federal workplaces, but, with a large group of federal employees expected to retire over the next few years, this bill would help recruit and retain the most qualified and talented federal workforce.