

Legislative Week Summary 2018

As a new member of NFFE's Legislative Team, I experienced for the first time the important efforts made to represent NFFE in direct contact with our federal legislators in our nation's capital to advance our position to enhance and protect the interests of federal and forest service employees. I had many revelations as the week progressed.

Early on I noticed the high energy of the many attending the IAM conference and the many staying at the hotels near the Capitol and the many in the Senate and House office buildings with meetings scheduled with legislators to advance their cause, it became very clear how important and vital that our voice must be heard .

Our group, NFFE was one of what I estimate to be I the hundreds competing for an audience with legislators/staffers who vet and prioritize the earmark requests from thousands of pieces of legislation. Given the volume of issues and legislative workload legislators manage, most may not know our legislative concerns unless it is brought to their attention and onto their radar. I learned that to have any chance for success, it was critical to NFFE and or any group, to present their issues in person to be able to influence legislation.

So in all my meetings and to the best of my ability I spoke with staffers with passion and clarity to ask for support, continued support, or co-sponsorship of Fair RETIRE Act (S. 29) / First Responder Fair RETIRE Act (H.R. 3303) that would allow those federal employee first responders who were injured on the job and unable to perform the duties of their position to remain in "6c".

Secondly, With the same effort to express NFFE's concern and position strongly opposing language in the President's FY 2019 budget proposing to privatize the 26 Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) managed by the USFS and asking for support to oppose this proposed legislation.

Equally important and NFFE's position made I all my meeting strongly opposing language in the President's FY 2019 budget that negatively effects active and retired federal employees by either cutting and eliminating pay, or increasing employee contributions for benefits.

The rest of the position papers were mentioned and left with the staffers to place on their radar. The sense that I got from feedback from the staffers was that supporting the "6c" fix was common sense and that the language in the President's FY 2019 budget was only a starting point for negotiation but were appreciative that it was brought to their attention.

I was a great learning opportunity for me personally. Thanks to all the members that I was teamed up with for teaching me so much and especially to Loredia for my preparation! Without our physical presence on the "Hill" voicing our concerns, I don't believe we are even in the "game" to influence legislation to enhance and protect the interests of federal and forest service employees!

Norman Alires

LL2197