

October 19, 2023

# KILMER, BIPARTISAN GROUP REINTRODUCE BILL TO HELP SHIPYARD WORKERS, OTHER FEDERAL EMPLOYEES RETIRE ON TIME

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – Today, U.S. Representatives Derek Kilmer (WA-06), Gerry Connolly (VA-11), Don Bacon (NE-02), and David Valadao (CA-22) reintroduced the [Federal Retirement Fairness Act \(FRFA\)](#), legislation to address a gap for federal employees who began their careers as temporary workers and were thus unable to make retirement contributions. The FRFA will allow these workers to make catch-up contributions to ensure they can retire as planned. In the absence of this provision, many face an unfair choice: exit the federal service without complete retirement benefits or delay retirement to achieve full benefits.

“Many federal employees begin their careers in temporary positions before transitioning to permanent status. We need to have their backs,” **said Rep. Kilmer.** “The Federal Retirement Fairness Act will ensure that all federal workers, from those at Puget Sound Naval Shipyard to postal workers and beyond, have the opportunity to retire on time, regardless of how they started their careers.”

Before 1989, the Office of Personnel Management permitted federal employees to make catch-up payments, enabling them to compensate for years they didn’t contribute to their retirement accounts. However, this provision was eliminated when the government transitioned to a new federal employee retirement system.

Today, workers from places such as Puget Sound Naval Shipyard and other federal facilities nationwide face a predicament. Those who began as temporary employees and later transitioned to full-time positions might have to work extra years compared to their colleagues to achieve equivalent

retirement benefits. The FRFA aims to reinstate the option for employees hired post-1989, allowing them to retroactively purchase the time they served as temporary federal employees, mirroring the terms that existed before 1989.

**Rep. Kilmer continued,** "It is important that all federal employees have the freedom to retire on time after their years of service if they have made the necessary contributions to do so. This bipartisan bill ensures that all employees, regardless of their initial hiring status, are granted the same retirement opportunity for the same amount of work."

"No matter how they begin their careers, all federal employees deserve the opportunity to retire on time and with the full benefits they have earned," **said Rep. Connolly.** "The federal workforce is our nation's greatest asset. They serve the American people with dignity and dedication every single day. I am proud to join my colleagues in this important effort to guarantee the fair retirements that federal employees deserve."

"Many federal workers start as temporary employees and work for five to ten years, unable to contribute to their retirement, before becoming permanent," **said Rep. Bacon.** "Allowing them to make a lump sum payment towards their retirement when they become permanent allows them to have a firm footing for their future and provides peace of mind."

"Public servants deserve recognition for their service just like every other worker – whether they began their career as a temporary or a full-time federal employee. The Federal Retirement Fairness Act will ensure these hard-working Americans are not punished for beginning their career as temporary employees," **said Rep. Valadao.** "I'm proud to join my colleagues in re-introducing this bipartisan legislation that will help federal employees retire on time."

The FRFA is endorsed by the following organizations:

- American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE)
- American Postal Workers Union (APWU)
- Federal Managers Association (FMA)
- International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE)

- National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC)
- National Federation of Federal Employees (NFFE)
- National Federation of Federal Employees Forest Service Council (NFFE-FSC)
- National Rural Letter Carriers' Association (NRLCA)

"The APWU is in strong support of the bipartisan Federal Retirement Fairness Act and applauds Representatives Kilmer (D-WA-06), Bacon (R-NE-02), Connolly (D-VA-11), and Valadao (R-CA-22) for their leadership on this critical issue," **said Mark Dimondstein, President, APWU.** "This legislation would allow more than 100,000 postal workers who converted from temporary to career positions to retire on time with their full benefits. Regardless of an employee's initial hiring status, all postal and federal employees should have access to the benefits they have earned for their dedicated work."

"The Federal Managers Association (FMA) appreciates the support, time, and efforts from Representative Kilmer (D-WA-06) on the introduction of the Bipartisan bill Federal Retirement Fairness Act," **said James V. Cappa, President, FMA Chapter 14.** "Federal workers would like to see this inequality corrected and allow Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) employees to make deposits (buy-back the time) in the same manner as CSRS employees."

"NALC appreciates the leadership and work of Reps. Kilmer, Valadao, Bacon, and Connolly to introduce the Federal Retirement Fairness Act," **said Brian L. Renfro, President, NALC.** "We urge the House to pass this bill that would benefit letter carriers and other federal employees who have devoted their working lives to public service. A significant number of active city letter carriers have worked in a non-career position, and that time is not currently creditable for retirement. This bill would change that, allowing letter carriers, and millions of other federal employees, to buy back this time and plan for their well-earned retirements."

NARFE believes all time spent serving the public should be credited toward retirement calculations. Unfortunately, since 1989, feds who started as temporary employees and then converted to full-time employment have had

to work years longer than their peers to receive the same retirement benefits," **said William Shackelford, National President, NARFE.** "NARFE is grateful to Congressman Kilmer for leading the way in creating a more equitable retirement system for these public servants by allowing these dedicated individuals to 'buy back' years during which they did not contribute to their retirement accounts."

"Seasonal and temporary federal employees who answer the call of duty deserve the same level of deference as the permanent employees they work with," **said Randy Erwin, National President, NFFE.** "It is unconscionable to ignore temporary or seasonal labor upon becoming permanent employees. Given that many of these employees risk their lives and health working in dangerous jobs at agencies such as DoD and the federal land management agencies, to deny counting that time is akin to creating a second class of employee. The Federal Retirement Fairness Act allows these workers to "buy back" the time they've earned, and it will also help with the recruitment and retention of experienced federal workers to full-time positions."

"The National Rural Letter Carriers' Association (NRLCA) would like to thank Congressmen Derek Kilmer, David Valadao, Don Bacon, and Gerry Connolly for introducing the bipartisan Federal Retirement Fairness Act," **said Don Maston, President, NRLCA.** "The NRLCA fully supports the Federal Retirement Fairness Act, which will give rural letter carriers the opportunity to buy back credit for service, something we have been advocating for a very long time. This bill ensures that rural letter carriers, and other federal employees, who began their employment as non-career workers and did not have the ability to make retirement contributions, are granted the opportunity to make catch-up retirement contributions so all of their time is accurately reflected as creditable service when they retire."

# # #