

Westerman #1

**Amendment in the Nature of a Substitute to H.R. 3499
Offered by Mr. Westerman of Arkansas**

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Direct Hire To Fight Fires”.

SEC. 2. DIRECT HIRE AUTHORITY TO APPOINT INDIVIDUALS TO FEDERAL WILDLAND FIREFIGHTING AND FIREFIGHTING SUPPORT POSITIONS IN THE FOREST SERVICE OR THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR.

(a) IN GENERAL.—[Chapter 96](#) of title 5, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

“§ 9603. Direct hire authority to appoint individuals to Federal wildland firefighting and firefighting support positions in Forest Service and Department of the Interior

“(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior may appoint, without regard to the provisions of sections 3309 through 3318 of title 5, United States Code, and part 211 and part 337 of subpart A of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations, qualified candidates to any position described in subsection (b) in the Forest Service or the Department of the Interior, respectively.

“(b) POSITIONS.—A position described in this subsection is any Federal wildland firefighting position, or any position in support of such firefighting position, within any of the following occupational series (or any successor series):

“(1) Forestry Technician Series, GS–0462.

“(2) Aircraft Operation Series, GS–2181.

“(3) Miscellaneous Administration and Program Series, GS–0301, that supports firefighting and is eligible for primary or secondary firefighter retirement coverage.

“(4) General Natural Resources Management and Biological Sciences Series, GS–0401, that supports firefighting and is eligible for primary or secondary firefighter retirement coverage.

“(5) Aviation Management Specialist Series, GS–2101.

“(6) Engineering Equipment Operator, WG, WL, or WS–5716, that supports firefighting and is eligible for primary or secondary firefighter retirement coverage.

“(7) Dispatching Series, GS–2151, that supports firefighting and is eligible for primary or secondary firefighter retirement coverage.

“(8) Equipment Specialist, GS–1670.

“(9) Any additional occupational series developed specifically for wildland firefighting.”.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections for such chapter is amended by adding after the item relating to section 9602 the following:

“9603. Direct hire authority to appoint individuals to Federal wildland firefighting and firefighting support positions in Forest Service and Department of the Interior.”.

SEC. 3. STREAMLINING AND TRANSPARENCY IN FEDERAL WILDLAND FIREFIGHTING HIRING AT THE FOREST SERVICE AND THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR.

(a) STREAMLINED HIRING.—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretaries, in consultation with the Director of the Office of Personnel Management, shall implement policies to recruit and retain wildland firefighters that—

(1) reduce the amount of time required to hire wildland firefighters and wildland firefighting support personnel;

(2) address and eliminate redundancies in the Federal hiring process for wildland firefighters and wildland firefighting support personnel;

(3) streamline the process for hiring wildland firefighters and wildland firefighting support personnel who were employed by the agencies in prior years; and

(4) reduce barriers for wildland firefighters transferring between agencies.

(b) TRANSPARENCY.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Beginning 1 year after the date of the enactment of this Act and annually thereafter, the Secretaries shall each submit a report to the relevant Congressional Committees that includes the information described in paragraph (2) no later than February 1st of each calendar year.

(2) REQUIREMENTS.—As part of the report submitted under paragraph (1), the Secretaries shall include information regarding—

(A) the number of wildland firefighters and wildland firefighting support personnel the agency anticipates it will need for that calendar year, delineated by position;

(B) the number of hiring events the agency is planning to hold that calendar year;

(C) the number of wildland firefighters and wildland firefighting support personnel currently employed by the agency, delineated by position;

(D) the number of wildland firefighting vacancies by State;

(E) any barriers the agency is facing to meet the hiring goal outlined in subsection (a);

(F) the implementation of the direct hiring authority provided in section 3 of this Act;

(G) the implementation of the streamlined hiring policies developed under subsection (a);
and

(H) recommendations to Congress to further improve the recruitment and retention of wildland firefighters and wildland firefighting support personnel.

(3) **PUBLIC AVAILABILITY.**—The Secretaries shall each annually publish the report submitted under paragraph (1) on a publicly available website.

(4) **DEFINITIONS.**—In this section:

(A) **AGENCY.**—The term “agency” means—

(i) the Forest Service, with respect to National Forest System lands; and

(ii) the Department of the Interior, with respect to lands under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of the Interior.

(B) **RELEVANT CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES.**—The term “relevant Congressional Committees” means—

(i) the Committees on Oversight and Accountability, Agriculture, and Natural Resources of the House of Representatives; and

(ii) the Committees on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry and Energy and Natural Resources of the Senate.

(C) **SECRETARIES.**—The term “Secretaries” means the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior.