

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 435

To amend title 5, United States Code, to provide direct hire authority to appoint individuals to Federal wildland firefighting and firefighting support positions in the Forest Service or the Department of the Interior, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JANUARY 15, 2025

Mr. ISSA (for himself, Mr. KILEY of California, and Mr. OBERNOLTE) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and in addition to the Committees on Natural Resources, and Agriculture, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To amend title 5, United States Code, to provide direct hire authority to appoint individuals to Federal wildland firefighting and firefighting support positions in the Forest Service or the Department of the Interior, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

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

1 **SEC. 2. DIRECT HIRE AUTHORITY TO APPOINT INDIVID-**
2 **UALS TO FEDERAL WILDLAND FIREFIGHTING**
3 **AND FIREFIGHTING SUPPORT POSITIONS IN**
4 **THE FOREST SERVICE OR THE DEPARTMENT**
5 **OF THE INTERIOR.**

6 (a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 96 of title 5, United
7 States Code, is amended by adding at the end the fol-
8 lowing:

9 **“§ 9603. Direct hire authority to appoint individuals**
10 **to Federal wildland firefighting and fire-**
11 **fighting support positions in the Forest**
12 **Service and Department of the Interior**

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

20 “(b) POSITIONS.—A position described in this sub-
21 section is any Federal wildland firefighting position, or
22 any position in support of such firefighting position, with-
23 in any of the following occupational series (or any suc-
24 cessor series):

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

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

1 “(3) Miscellaneous Administration and Pro-
2 gram Series, GS-0301, that supports firefighting
3 and is eligible for primary or secondary firefighter
4 retirement coverage.

5 “(4) General Natural Resources Management
6 and Biological Sciences Series, GS-0401, that sup-
7 ports firefighting and is eligible for primary or sec-
8 ondary firefighter retirement coverage.

9 “(5) Aviation Management Specialist Series,
10 GS-2101.

11 “(6) Engineering Equipment Operator, WG,
12 WL, or WS-5716, that supports firefighting and is
13 eligible for primary or secondary firefighter retire-
14 ment coverage.

15 “(7) Dispatching Series, GS-2151, that sup-
16 ports firefighting and is eligible for primary or sec-
17 ondary firefighter retirement coverage.

18 “(8) Equipment Specialist, GS-1670.

19 “(9) Any additional occupational series devel-
20 oped specifically for wildland firefighting.”.

21 (b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections
22 for such chapter is amended by adding after the item re-
23 lating to section 9602 the following:

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

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

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

10 (1) reduce the amount of time required to hire
11 wildland firefighters and wildland firefighting sup-
12 port personnel;

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

16 (3) streamline the process for hiring wildland
17 firefighters and wildland firefighting support per-
18 sonnel who were employed by the agencies in prior
19 years; and

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

22 (b) TRANSPARENCY.—

23 (1) IN GENERAL.—Beginning 1 year after the
24 date of the enactment of this Act and annually
25 thereafter, the Secretaries shall each submit a report
26 to the relevant Congressional Committees that in-

1 includes the information described in paragraph (2)
2 not later than February 1st of each calendar year.

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

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

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

12 (C) the number of wildland firefighters and
13 wildland firefighting support personnel cur-
14 rently employed by the agency, delineated by
15 position;

16 (D) the number of wildland firefighting va-
17 cancies by State;

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

20 (F) the implementation of the direct hiring
21 authority provided in section 2;

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

1 (H) recommendations to Congress to fur-
2 ther improve the recruitment and retention of
3 wildland firefighters and wildland firefighting
4 support personnel.

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

8 (4) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

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

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

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

16 (B) RELEVANT CONGRESSIONAL COMMIT-
17 TEES.—The term “relevant Congressional Com-
18 mittees” means—

19 (i) the Committees on Oversight and
20 Government Reform, Agriculture, and Nat-
21 ural Resources of the House of Represent-
22 atives; and

23 (ii) the Committees on Homeland Se-
24 curity and Governmental Affairs, Agri-

1 culture, Nutrition, and Forestry and En-
2 ergy and Natural Resources of the Senate.

3 (C) SECRETARIES.—The term “Secre-
4 taries” means the Secretary of Agriculture and
5 the Secretary of the Interior.

