



A Message from NWSEO President

(April 16, 2018) It has been well over a decade now since I first proposed to the then governing body of the NWS, known as the Corporate Board that a 5 through 12 progression for 1340 series employees makes sense financially and managerially. I presented at the time that PCS moves for persons selected as a Journeyman forecaster were averaging \$40k to \$50k each. The agency could not give me an exact number back then for those specific moves but that was a pretty good guestimate. When we looked at the data the raise in pay from going to a GS12 from an 11 was less than \$10k per year so it would take four to five years for the agency to be losing money on a specific intern. The data also showed the far majority of interns were getting promoted to GS 12s way before they had a year in grade as an 11. In fact at the time of my presentation there were only two interns in the NWS that had spent more than 5 years at a GS 11 in the entire country.

In other words almost all of the time the agency was saving \$40k to \$50k per promotion. Financially this really made sense for both the agency and the interns, who would after all be guaranteed their GS 12.

Not only would this plan save the NWS a couple million dollars every year it would create a larger pool of Journeyman forecasters at every office making managing our services easier. In addition it would make it wise for offices to have on station HMTs at the GS 11 level to maintain stability in the observation/climate type services an office offers. It also allowed meteorologists to do the job they went to school to learn how to do. So we saw it as a win/win for our members and for the NWS. The only thing we asked for in return was that the agency develops a job swap program similar to what other agencies have where if you want to go to city X and you find someone there that wanted to go to where you work and both managers agree, you could do it. We asked that the agency maintain a list and they use half of the savings from the 5 -12 progression to fund the moves each year on a first come first serve basis. If the parties were willing to waive PCS they would not be on the list and could do it at any time. We also asked for fair, reasonable but substantial standards before the employee's progress to the 12 level. It is in no party's interest that unqualified people are promoted into the job and finally we asked that all current interns be grandfathered into the new system.

My proposal was unanimously rejected by the NWS Corporate Board.

A few years ago the NWS had a change of heart and created a team to develop a 5 through 12 progressions. They even allowed NWSEO to put a couple union members on this team. The people we selected were not labor law experts but an intern and an HMT that would be impacted by this change. This team came up with ideas and twice a representative of this team met with the NLC and we told them what was wrong with their plan and why it would not work.

Over a year went by and we heard nothing from the NWS. Then a little over a week ago, right at the start of a two week CBA negotiations session, where they knew it would be harder for us to respond within the time limits, the NWS proposed a 5 through 12 progressions which strips interns of many of the rights they have now. In my opinion it creates a slippery slope for other employees that are not 1340s also.

First of all the plan is not clear that they will backfill what is currently the intern/HMT unit and could very well be read they will not and instead just hire the what is typically 5 journeyman positions in an office straight off the street as a GS 12. Each office would then absorb the extra duties. This would result in approximately 400 less operational positions in the NWS and a complete elimination of HMTs in the NWS. The plan suggests some stringent standards for promotion to the 12 level and the union is okay with this as long as they are fair and equally applied, however in their plan even if you meet those standards, have a meets or exceeds rating and you have your time in grade you are not guaranteed your promotion and in at least one circumstance they say flat out you will not get your promotion right away. There are other smaller issues the NWSEO has with this plan, but in its current form, this is a very bad proposal for interns, HMTs and all operational WFO employees (who will have to pick up the slack for having less people at each office). It is also a slippery slope for all NWS employees if we allow something less than an automatic career ladder progression in one unit.

We encourage the NWS to respect its employees and send the NWSEO a proposal that does not strip employees of their rights and does not dismantle the operational units within the WFOs.

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