Senate Committee Approves Waiver of Premium Pay Cap for IMETS

(November 4, 2021) The Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee today approved legislation that would exempt Federal wildland firefighting personnel, including NWS Incident Meteorologists, from both the weekly and annual premium pay caps during 2022. The original version of the Wildland Firefighter Fair Pay Act applied only to employees of the Departments of Interior and Agriculture, but Senators Jacky Rosen (D-NV) and Alex Padilla (D-CA) offered an amendment to extend that pay cap waiver to NWS IMETS at the request of NWSEO.

In offering her amendment, Senator Rosen explained why IMETS should be included in the bill:

“These individuals work closely with incident command teams in the field to interpret the weather to help predict fire severity and behavior and provide weather briefings to fire crews. As wildfires continue to worsen and wildfire season gets longer each year, it is more important now than ever to reduce any barriers for our firefighting workforce. . .”

“These meteorologists deserve to be included in the bill. They really work closely with these incident teams. As we know, wildfires do create their own weather on the ground and this saves lives, not just of the firefighters, people and structures, animals all around there. It helps them fight the fire. It helps them also evacuate if they need to. It’s very important that these meteorologists are with them. So I would urge a yes vote on our amendment.”

The Senate version of the bill also requires the NWS to provide Congress with a report on how it plans to hire and train additional IMETS and to modernize their compensation.

A similar bill that includes IMETS at NWSEO’s request has been introduced in the House by Rep. Zoe Lofgren (D-CA) but has not yet received committee review.

-NWSEO-

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No one works harder for NOAA employees than NOAA employees.

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