

Congressional hearing on temporary hiring reform

June 30, 2010 at 2:00 p.m. in 2154 RHOB
House Government Oversight and Reform Committee;
Subcommittee on Federal Workforce, Postal Service and the District of Columbia
“Temporary Employee Practices: How Long Does Temporary Last?”

Update: June 25, 2010

The Forest Service, Park Service, NFFE, and a number of other federal employee unions will be testifying. NFFE will be highlighting the stories of two employees who have been "temporary" seasonal workers for 30+ years. NFFE is arranging for these employees to be able to attend the hearing and answer questions about their careers.

You should be able to access live streaming video of the hearing on the Subcommittee's website at http://oversight.house.gov/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5003:temporary-employee-practices-how-long-does-temporary-last&catid=54:hearings&Itemid=27 (assuming streaming video is compatible with your computer capabilities and settings). The hearing is open to the public, so if you'll be in the DC area you're welcome to attend in person.

Agency leadership was in Madison for the NLC meeting this week, and Council President Ron Thatcher and I took advantage of this opportunity to reach out to them and ask for their support for reform. Specifically, we asked for the agency to support our efforts to put a "pathway to permanence" in place for employees who have been appointed year after year to a series of temporary appointments to perform regular and recurring seasonal work. This will require regulatory and/or statutory action that is beyond the control of the agency; however, the agency's support would be critically helpful in achieving it.

Without a pathway to permanence, conversion of temporary jobs to permanent seasonal jobs would lead to a purge of many long-term temporary employees. This is because current regulations deny them competitive status and creditable service time for their years of work. The current situation is like driving down the interstate at 70 mph and realizing you're on ice. Slamming on the brakes is the wrong move. Similarly, an abrupt abolishment of temporary positions would land many employees, and the agencies that depend on their expertise, into the ditch as well. In 1994, an effort at reform was begun without first putting the right tool in place. Many were harmed instead of helped. This is not acceptable. We cannot abandon employees who have given so many years of service to this agency, and we will not.

Specifically, we are calling for legislation that would:

- grant competitive standing to long-term temporary employees with a certain aggregated amount of service, so they could compete for jobs like any other federal employee
- afford them priority consideration for their job if it is converted to permanent status (would be considered a "permanent successor position" in the context of current regulations)
- give them creditable service time for their "temporary" service (note that creditable service is a separate issue from annuity buy back)

We are hopeful that agency leadership will join us in supporting a pathway to permanence. Our proposal has no price tag. It has no mandate. It would simply provide management with a necessary tool for reform. With the right tool in place, our real work for reform with justice can begin.

NFFE Nat'l has provided amazing support on this effort. We would not even be in the game without the connections they've made in Washington. Thanks to all dues-paying members for their support, without which none of this would be possible.

Mark Davis, Chair
NFFE Forest Service Council Legislative Committee