

ALEX PADILLA

U.S. SENATOR  CALIFORNIA

Wildland Firefighter Paycheck Protection Act of 2025

The bipartisan Wildland Firefighter Paycheck Protection Act of 2025 would ensure that the current pay raise for federal wildland firefighters is made permanent and that the federal government can recruit and retain a sufficient wildland firefighting workforce.

According to the Government Accountability Office (GAO), the federal wildland firefighting workforce is made up of approximately 18,700 firefighters (including fire management and support staff) from the Department of Agriculture's Forest Service and from four agencies in the Department of the Interior. A significant consequence of increased catastrophic wildfire activity across the American West is the strain it has placed on Federal agencies' ability to recruit and retain wildland firefighters.

Factors such as low pay, poor work-life balance, and the excruciating mental and physical toll of working longer and more brutal fire seasons has caused many firefighters to pursue better employment opportunities at state agencies and in the private sector.

What the Wildland Firefighter Paycheck Protection Act would do:

This bill would establish specialized pay for federal wildland firefighters. Specifically, this bill would:

- **Permanently Increase Federal Wildland Firefighter Pay.** The bill would avoid the impending pay cliff by permanently increasing wildland firefighter pay at levels at or near those enacted within the current temporary increase.
- **Establish a new Pay Scale for Wildland Firefighters.** The bulk of the pay increases within the bill are realized via the establishment of a new pay scale for wildland firefighters at all grade levels similar to the General Schedule (GS) pay scale that is applicable to most Federal employees.
- **Establish Additional Pay Supplements for Wildland Firefighters.** Base pay is supplemented by pay for each day a firefighter is deployed on a wildland fire.
- **Requires Consistency in Agencies' Policies Related to Work-Life Balance.** To limit burnout, the bill directs agencies to work to make existing policies consistent, and to study