

a coalition of partners to bring the Arizona Trail from its inception to a nearly completed, multiple-use, non-motorized, long-distance trail. Trail enthusiasts look forward to the completion of the Arizona Trail. Its designation as a national trail would help to protect the natural, cultural, and historic resources it contains for the public to use and enjoy.

By Mr. JOHNSON:

S. 2355. A bill to make available hazardous duty incentive pay to uniformed service members performing firefighting duties; to the Committee on Armed Services.

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I rise today to introduce the Fair Pay for Military Firefighters Act. This bill authorizes hazardous duty incentive pay for our Nation's military firefighters.

It may come as a surprise to many of my colleagues, as it did to me, that military firefighters are not currently eligible to receive hazardous duty incentive pay. This issue was first brought to my attention in a letter I received several months ago from an Air Force Staff Sergeant stationed at Ellsworth Air Force Base. The letter stated, "We are in one of the most dangerous jobs in the world. We face danger not only when we deploy like other jobs that get this pay but we face hazards at our home station."

As the Staff Sergeant said, firefighting is in itself a dangerous profession, but military firefighters must confront a wide variety of threats and are exposed to toxic materials distinctive to the military. The fires they fight often involve fuel and propellants, munitions, or chemicals which present unique and extremely dangerous situations. These servicemembers face risks not only when in combat, but as a part of their every day duties. Despite these dangers, most of the approximate 5,000 military firefighters serving in the Armed Forces are not eligible to receive hazardous duty incentive pay. If these servicemembers are willing to take the risk, our nation should be willing to provide them the benefits they deserve.

In addition to being the right thing to do, I believe there are broader reasons to support hazardous duty incentive pay for military firefighters. First, there is an issue of fairness. Federal civilian firefighters, who also face great risk and are critically important to protecting our nation, rightly have risk calculated into their compensation package. This creates a situation where federal civilian and military firefighters, who often work side-by-side, are exposed to the same risk but are compensated differently.

Second, it is my understanding that each of the Services supports providing this benefit to our military firefighters because they see it as a manning and retention issue. In fact, according to survey results, lack of hazardous duty incentive pay was cited by military

firefighters as one of the top three reasons for morale and retention problems. The Air Force has specifically stated that the lack of hazardous duty incentive pay is a primary factor in poor retention rates among its military firefighters. In my view, providing hazardous duty incentive pay is essential to retaining our best firefighters and maintaining this crucial capability within our Armed Forces.

Mr. President, I am pleased the Fair Pay for Military firefighters Act has been endorsed by both the Fleet Reserve Association and the Air Force Sergeants Association and I thank them for their assistance in preparing this legislation. I ask unanimous consent that the full text of two letters from these distinguished organizations be printed in the RECORD and the bill be printed in the RECORD.

I look forward to working with my colleagues to pass the Fair Pay for Military Firefighters Act and to extending hazardous duty incentive pay benefits to our nation's military firefighters. There can be no doubt that firefighting is one of the most dangerous professions. Military firefighters understand this threat and deserve the recognition of receiving hazardous duty incentive pay for the sacrifices they make and the risks they take.

There being no objection, the two letters and the text of the bill were ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

FLEET RESERVE ASSOCIATION,
Alexandria, VA, April 22, 2004.

Hon. TIM JOHNSON,
U.S. Senate, Hart Senate Office Building,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR JOHNSON: The Fleet Reserve Association (FRA) has been advised that you plan to introduce a bill to recognize the regimen that requires military firefighters to put themselves in harm's way by authorizing their eligibility to receive Hazardous Duty Incentive Pay (HDIP). FRA strongly endorses this initiative.

There is no doubt these firefighters rate special consideration in the performance of their duties. They race to quell fires placing themselves in jeopardy from dangerous traffic conditions. They rush into burning buildings to fight flames and smoke, rescue persons in peril, and face the possibility of structures falling on them at any moment. They rush to stop burning aircraft from exploding, fight toxic chemical spills, rescue victims in danger of losing their lives, resolve hazardous material conditions, and even free kittens caught in tree tops. All are dangerous and can be life threatening at any time.

It is the Association's understanding that the military services are in favor of authorizing this special pay to their military firefighters. However, there are forces within the Administration that believe military firefighters, all enlisted service members, do not deserve HDIP. But the question arises that if their sacrifices are not worthy of recognition then why do civilian personnel, working side-by-side with these uniformed personnel, receive a risk factor incorporated in their federal pay checks?

FRA applauds your leadership on this proposal, and remains committed to working with you and your staff on its advancement. Please contact our legislative department at

(703) 683-1400 if the Association can be of assistance.

JOSEPH L. BARNES,
National Executive Secretary.

AIR FORCE SERGEANTS
ASSOCIATION,
Temple Hills, MD, April 23, 2004.

Hon. TIM JOHNSON,
Hart Senate Office Building,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR JOHNSON: On behalf of the 135,000 members of this association, thank you for introducing legislation which would provide Hazardous Duty Incentive Pay for military firefighters. Your efforts will undoubtedly pave the way to correct an inequity that senior military leaders have identified as a contributing factor to low retention and morale among enlisted firefighters.

Military firefighters face hazardous duty every day—not just in wartime. They are confronted with fuel fires and explosive situations on our flightlines and in the environments unique to executing the military missions required to protect this nation. Like you, we are extremely proud of their courage and dedication. We are pleased you have taken the lead to honor them and to provide them equitable compensation for their intrepidity.

Senator Johnson, thank you again for your leadership and your dedication to enlisted military members. AFSA will continue to inform Airmen of all ranks at our chapters around the world that they have a dedicated champion in Washington thanks to your untiring efforts. We look forward to continue working with you on this and other matters of mutual concern. Please let me know when we can be of further assistance to you.

Sincerely,

RICHARD M. DEAN,
Executive Director.

S. 2355

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Fair Pay for Military Firefighters Act of 2004".

SEC. 2. AVAILABILITY OF HAZARDOUS DUTY INCENTIVE PAY FOR MILITARY FIREFIGHTERS.

(a) ADDITIONAL TYPE OF DUTY ELIGIBLE FOR PAY.—Subsection (a) of section 301 of title 37, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in paragraph (12), by striking "or" at the end;

(2) by redesignating paragraph (13) as paragraph (14); and

(3) by inserting after paragraph (12) the following new paragraph:

"(13) involving regular participation as a firefighting crew member, as determined by the Secretary concerned; or".

(b) MONTHLY AMOUNT OF PAY.—Subsection (c) of such section is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1), by striking "(12)" and inserting "(13)"; and

(2) in paragraph (2)(A), by striking "(13)" and inserting "(14)".

By Ms. COLLINS (for herself and Mr. FEINGOLD):

S. 2356. A bill to require the Director of the Office of Management and Budget to issue guidance for, and provide oversight of, the management of micropurchases made with Government-wide commercial purchase cards, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Governmental Affairs.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I rise today with my colleague, Senator RUSS