

House Passes HEROES Act COVID-19 Relief Bill

SUMMARY: This evening the House passed the HEROES Act, the latest bill in response to the coronavirus pandemic, which includes provisions impacting federal employees.

This evening, by a vote of 208-199, the House passed the Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions Act or the HEROES Act. This bill, which was introduced on Tuesday, is the latest bill considered by Congress to respond to the coronavirus pandemic. Given that the White House has issued a Statement of Administration Policy in opposition to the bill and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) has expressed a desire to wait and see if another bill is needed, it is unlikely that any new coronavirus relief legislation will be enacted before Memorial Day.

The HEROES Act contains several provisions that would impact federal employees, including:

- Creating a HEROES Fund that would provide federal employees with additional premium pay of \$13 per hour, up to a maximum \$10,000 for those whose basic pay is less than \$200,000, for either those who have regular or routine contact with the public or those who must report to a worksite where social distancing is not possible and other preventative measures are not available;
- Continued telework for all eligible federal employees throughout the pandemic, plus incentives for agencies to expand their telework programs;
- Allowing federal first responders, including CBP Officers, to stay in their current law enforcement retirement plans even if they are unable to meet the physical requirements of their position due to exposure to coronavirus and are moved to other civil service jobs;
- A presumption that federal employees who work with the public and are diagnosed with COVID-19 contracted it in the workplace, for workers' compensation purposes;
- Eliminating out-of-pocket costs for COVID-19 treatment under the Federal Employee Health Benefit Program;
- Extending the emergency leave provisions in the Families First Coronavirus Relief Act to all federal employees.

In addition, there are several agency specific provisions in the bill, including language to provide additional funding for several agencies such as the Bureau of Fiscal Service (over \$78 million to respond to COVID-19) and the IRS (\$520 million for costs related to COVID-19 and the extended filing season).

NTEU supports the HEROES Act and will continue to work with Congressional leaders to ensure passage so that federal employees receive the support and protection they need through this crisis.