

The transfer of all functions relegated to FEMA by the bill must be completed within 120 days of enactment of the bill.

This matter is far too important, and impacts directly the lives of too many of our nation's citizens, to delay any further. We must act quickly to restore FEMA's autonomy and effectiveness.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 1174, the "FEMA Independence Act of 2009".

CONGRATULATIONS TO RON HULL

HON. ADRIAN SMITH

OF NEBRASKA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 25, 2009

Mr. SMITH of Nebraska. Madam Speaker, I rise today to offer my hearty congratulations to Ron Hull on his reception of the Pioneer Award from the NEBRASKAland Foundation for his efforts to portray the spirit of Nebraska's heritage through his good works.

Each year, the NEBRASKAland Foundation celebrates Nebraska's entrance into the union. During this event, the Foundation honors distinguished Nebraskans for the impressive contributions to the State of Nebraska.

Nothing sums up the spirit and values of Nebraska more than a person's willingness to reach out to friends, neighbors, and even strangers to help make our world a better place. Ron's dedication to tourism, historical leadership, and his career in public broadcasting is an inspiration.

I thank Ron for his dedication and his service.

PRIMARY CARE VOLUNTEER INCENTIVE ACT

HON. KATHY CASTOR

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 25, 2009

Ms. CASTOR of Florida. Madam Speaker, America is facing a troubling physician shortage. It is estimated that the U.S. could be short 200,000 physicians by next year, while the number of patients is expected to increase by 24 percent. Furthermore, most medical school students incur more than \$100,000 in student debt and primary care doctors are becoming scarce. New physicians are entering more lucrative specialties that better assist in their student debt payoff.

To join efforts that are underway across the country to address health care workforce shortages, today I will introduce the Primary Care Volunteer Incentive Act. This legislation will create a volunteer program for primary care physicians that will allow them to receive medical school loan repayment for their dedication to a community health center with high needs.

The Primary Care Volunteer Incentive Act will implement a program for doctors who specialize in family medicine, general pediatrics and general internal medicine. This program will request a five year volunteer commitment that will help doctors to develop a strong and longstanding relationship with their patients and communities. The program will build on

the current National Health Service Corps program by allowing doctors to volunteer only part-time at a community health center in an area with a large primary care physician shortage.

This legislation is a vital step in closing the gaps that exist for medically disenfranchised Americans. Fifty-two percent of uninsured Americans do not have a primary care provider and at least two in five residents in Alabama, Alaska, Florida, Kansas, Mississippi, Missouri, Oregon, South Carolina and Utah have inadequate access to routine health services. We know that lack of access to a primary care provider means that patients are not receiving preventive care, which helps people to lead healthier lives and keeps them out of emergency rooms for preventable and manageable conditions.

Too many of our neighbors are without basic care. Ensuring access and affordable health care should be our top priority. I have seen first hand the positive impact that access to community health care has given my district in the Tampa Bay area, and today my bill will help to see that communities will not continue to suffer losses in primary care providers that cannot be afforded.

INTRODUCTION OF THE PART-TIME FEDERAL EMPLOYEES EQUITY ACT

HON. JAMES P. MORAN

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 25, 2009

Mr. MORAN of Virginia. Madam Speaker, I rise today to introduce legislation that will correct an inequity in the computation of retirement annuities for some federal employees. The Part-Time Federal Employees Equity Act is intended to help support the federal government's ability to retain current employees in the face of the oncoming wave of retirement that will hit the federal workforce in less than a decade.

I am proud to represent more than 98,000 Virginians who have served our country within the ranks of the federal civil service. Protecting the quality of life of these beneficiaries and ensuring the future strength of the federal retirement system are two of the most important issues to my district. It is essential that Congress support efforts that maintain the integrity, quality and vitality of the federal workforce.

It has been well documented that over the next ten years, the federal workforce will undergo significant demographic changes that threaten the federal government's strength and effectiveness. As the baby-boom generation, which makes up a disproportionately large part of the overall workforce, nears retirement age, federal agencies will face a crisis in manpower, especially within its senior executives and management ranks. Information from OPM shows that approximately "60 percent of the government's 1.6 million white-collar employees and 90 percent of about 6,000 Federal executives will be eligible for retirement within the next ten years."

This likely wave of retirement threatens to drain the federal workforce of its most experienced and talented employees at a pace that will be difficult to replace with a well-qualified,

trained workforce. Congress, in coordination with the Executive Branch, must develop an overall strategy with specific policy solutions so that the potential "brain drain" doesn't threaten the efficient delivery of government services.

One leading factor that influences the retention of senior personnel is the retirement package offered by the federal government. As currently structured, the federal retirement system for some workers actually penalizes employees that wish to extend their careers by working part-time. As the federal workforce faces the prospect of losing an unprecedented number of employees over the next 10 years, many of the anticipated shortages can be met with part-time employees. One of the greatest impediments to allowing part-time work are disincentives and restrictions imposed by the federal pension system.

I have introduced the Part-Time Federal Employees Equity Act to address the annuity computations of federal employees retiring under the Civil Servant Retirement System (CSRS). I believe that this legislation can serve the dual purpose of correcting a longstanding inequity for retiring federal employees, as well as offering employees nearing retirement the option for continued part-time service without negatively impacting their retirement benefits.

Over 10 years ago, the 100th Congress included a provision in the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA) of 1986 (P.L. 99-272) that amended the civil service retirement law for federal workers with part-time service. Section 15204 prevented part-time employees from being credited with the same number of years of service as those who worked full-time over the same period. Before the law's passage, an individual who had worked part-time for most of his or her career could switch to full-time work the last three years of his or her career and receive the same retirement benefits as someone who worked full-time throughout the same period.

As the Subcommittee knows, federal annuities are calculated by multiplying the average three highest continuous years of salary, times years of service, by an accrual rate. The new methodology determines the proportion of a full-time career that a part-time employee works and scales annuities accordingly. Under the formula, a part-time salary is calculated on a full-time equivalent basis (FTE) for retirement purposes. Thus, a worker's "high-three salary" could occur during a period of part-time service. This often happens when a senior-level worker cuts back on his or her hours. The disproportionate share of these workers appears to be women, who leave the federal service to care for others.

The problem with the new formula is that it has negative consequences for workers hired before 1986. First, it fails to provide the accrued full year of credit for each year of part-time service of workers who, before 1986, had completed part-time service for which they had understood they would receive full-time credit. Second, the formula can have a negative impact on retirees' annuity if the computation of the "high-three salary" occurs during part-time service. Specifically, the formula incorrectly minimizes full-time employment before 1986, which hurts agencies' ability to retain experienced federal workers by offering part-time employment. Finally, this complex formula can lead to computational errors involving annuities with part-time service. There are possibly