



February 23, 2023

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The National Association of Forest Service Retirees (NAFSR) is aware that National Experienced Workforce (NEW) Solutions has submitted proposed statutory language to both the House and Senate Agriculture Committees for their consideration during the 2023 Farm Bill development process.

NEW Solutions is a 501(c)(3) charitable nonprofit organization that helps federal agencies accomplish their missions by providing skilled and experienced workers to address technical, scientific, professional, and administrative capability and capacity needs. It promotes a diverse workforce, inclusive of age, by expanding the employment opportunities in federal agencies for individuals ages 55 and over, consistent with the Older Americans Act (OAA) of 1965 Title V – Community Service Employment for Older Americans.

NEW Solutions enters into cooperative agreements with federal agencies to secure qualified enrollees and manages all administrative aspects of the Experienced Services Program (ESP) and the similar Agriculture Conservation Experienced Services (ACES) Program. The federal agency directs the duties and day-to-day activities of these enrollees.

Unfortunately, we understand that many USDA agencies and offices currently lack the statutory authority to access ESP or ACES. To address this need, NEW Solutions has proposed statutory

language for the 2023 Farm Bill that would establish USDA-wide access to ESP and ACES, covering all programs and including all types of positions (technical, scientific, professional, and administrative). This statutory language would provide the authorization for a permanent program not dependent on renewal through the annual appropriations acts.

NAFSR knows that ESP and ACES enrollees provide short-term capacity to fill critical gaps, furnish unique skills not readily available, conduct training and development of less experienced federal employees, mentor new employees, and aid focused education and outreach efforts for programs, specific projects, and initiatives. These enrollees serve to improve the effectiveness of the federal workforce through needed and experienced capacity to help ensure that the Congressionally appropriated funds to USDA are fully utilized, benefitting America's taxpayers and the agricultural needs of the nation.

NAFSR also understands the proposed statutory language would be the foundation for USDA access to ESP and ACES as broadly as possible, with limited constraints and at its discretion. Importantly, NEW Solutions' proposed language is budget-neutral for USDA because it is not requesting additional funds from Congress to operate the program, but rather authority for the use of this "capability/capacity tool" to help USDA deliver its mission effectively and efficiently with assistance from experienced, senior enrollees.

On behalf of NAFSR, I want to express our support for your consideration of this proposal for statutory language in the 2023 Farm Bill to afford all USDA agencies and offices access to ESP or ACES. Based on NEW Solutions' recognized work in delivering ESP and ACES to the Forest Service, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the Research, Education, and Economics Mission Area, we are aware of how valuable ESP and ACES have been to help these USDA entities achieve their mission goals. We believe strongly that those USDA agencies and offices without current access to ESP or ACES would benefit similarly.

NAFSR urges favorable consideration by the U.S. Congress of NEW Solutions' statutory proposal for the 2023 Farm Bill to provide USDA-wide access to ESP and ACES.

Sincerely,

*Steve Ellis*

Steve Ellis, Chair  
National Association of Forest Service Retirees (NAFSR)