

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, Congressman Steny Hoyer (D-MD) issued the following statement marking Public Service Recognition Week (May 7 – 13), the nation’s annual celebration honoring the work of the more than 20 million federal, state and local government employees throughout the United States.

“Since 1985, we have celebrated Public Service Recognition Week to honor the contributions of federal, state and local government employees and recognize the numerous ways in which they work to improve the lives of all citizens. Celebrated in all fifty states and in over 1,400 cities, this week is an important opportunity to ensure that public employees receive the recognition and appreciation they deserve for performing as the most talented and dedicated public workforce in the world.

“From the men and women in uniform serving in our nation’s military and their civilian counterparts providing strategic support, to the educators who teach in our public schools and the scientists working to restore the Chesapeake Bay, the public employee workforce represents a large cross-section of the best our nation has to offer.

“In Maryland and throughout the Fifth Congressional District, federal employees make up a substantial part of our workforce; and throughout my career in Congress, I have made standing up for these critical public servants one of my top priorities.

“It is a fact that men and women who dedicate their lives to public service do so knowing that their compensation will be somewhat lower than the pay for comparable work in the private sector. However, the lack of adequate compensation is challenging the government’s ability to recruit top quality candidates to enter a career in public service. Furthermore, with the baby boom generation rapidly approaching retirement age, the need for quality public employees is only expected to grow.

“In 1990 - recognizing that the federal government was losing its ability to recruit and retain high-quality employees - I joined a bipartisan group of Members of Congress to pass the Federal Employee Pay Comparability Act (FEPCA). The purpose of this act was, over time, to move federal salaries for most white-collar federal employees to comparability with the private-sector. The law was designed to close the pay gap by 2002 with a 20 percent adjustment in 1994 and an additional 10 percent each year thereafter.

“Since the passage of FEPCA, Administrations have consistently ignored it, claiming “severe economic conditions” to delay achieving full comparability. With a stable economy, most economists would disagree that today’s indicators show ‘severe economic conditions.’

“This year, as I have done in previous Congresses, I have made clear that our federal workforce is due to be compensated at a level that reflects their dedication and hard work. Federal employees are the lifeblood of this nation, providing a myriad of vital services to hundreds of millions of Americans. The work undertaken by these talented men and women is critically important, and their compensation needs to fairly reflect that.

“In addition, I have introduced legislation to increase the government's share of Federal Employee Health Care Benefit Plan (FEHBP) premiums from 72 percent to 80 percent. As the cost of health care has exploded, the strain on every federal employee's pocket has worsened. This legislation will help take the bite out of rising health care costs and make it easier for federal employees to afford quality health care for themselves and their families.

“Public Service Recognition Week provides an opportunity to pause and think about all the ways in which public employees work to improve our lives and keep our country moving forward. From many of our nation’s greatest achievements to the countless ways these dedicated workers make America a wonderful place to work and live, there is much to be both proud and thankful for when it comes to the tradition of public service in our country. To all the people who continue that tradition and make this country proud in doing so: I say thank you.”

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