

(Washington, DC - March 7th, 2012) - Senator Daniel K. Akaka (D-Hawaii) and Congressman Elijah Cummings (D-Maryland) introduced legislation today to modernize the Hatch Act. They were joined in the Senate by cosponsors Senators Joseph Lieberman (ID-Connecticut), Carl Levin (D-Michigan), and Mike Lee (R-Utah).

Senator Akaka said: "The Hatch Act has worked for nearly 75 years to shield employees from pressure to use federal time and resources for partisan gain, while also protecting employees' personal freedoms of choice and expression. It is time for Congress to update the Hatch Act to provide greater flexibility for state and local government employees, and additional options for disciplining federal employees charged with minor violations of the Hatch Act."

Congressman Cummings said: "These are common-sense changes that will clarify the law and make it easier to enforce. State and local employees, such as police officers, should not be banned from running for public office, and there should be punishments less severe than firing for minor violations. I hope this reform will be passed swiftly by the House and Senate so the President can sign it this year."

Senator Levin said: "This legislation will allow hard-working employees of state and local government who are covered by the Hatch Act to run and serve as elected officials in their communities. It is past time that we clarified the Hatch Act so that these highly qualified individuals can have an opportunity to run for public office."

Senator Lieberman said: "This is a common sense bill that would help expand the pool of dedicated and talented public servants running for state and local office and focus scarce resources on more serious investigations. The bill would handle DC government employees more fairly by treating them like state and local employees."

Senator Lee said: "While federal employees must ensure that their first priority is serving the people, they are also citizens and deserve to have their freedoms protected. If we can update the Hatch Act to provide for greater flexibility for public workers while still ensuring the legitimacy of our politics, there should be no reason for anyone to oppose such a change."

The Hatch Act Modernization Act of 2012 would:

- Allow state and local government employees covered by the Hatch Act to run for partisan elective office;
- Provide the Merit Systems Protection Board – the independent federal agency that adjudicates Hatch Act complaints – with flexibility to issue a range of penalties for Hatch Act violations. Currently, employees who violate the Act must be terminated unless the Board unanimously agrees to reduce the penalty; and
- Ensure that employees of the District of Columbia are subject to the same restrictions on political activity that currently apply to employees of all other state and local government agencies.

The Hatch Act, enacted in 1939 and last amended in 1993, is a federal law that restricts political activity of federal employees, as well as state, local, and District of Columbia government employees whose positions are federally funded. It was created to ensure that federal resources are not directed for partisan political objectives and to protect civil servants from being coerced to participate in political activities.

For a section by section summary, please click [here](#).

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