



AMERICAN FEDERATION OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES, AFL-CIO

Eric Bunn Sr.
National Secretary-Treasurer

Dr. Everett B. Kelley
National President

Dr. Kendrick B. Roberson
NVP for Women & Fair Practices

March 19, 2026

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO (AFGE), I write urging you to support enactment of a measure – *today and no later than before Congress recesses for its April work period* – that would reopen the Department of Homeland Security and immediately pay tens of thousands of employees of the Department of Homeland Security who have not seen a paycheck since January 30. *If Congress cannot enact this measure in the next week, AFGE urges the two chambers to postpone their respective recesses until such time as an agreement to reopen DHS has been reached.*

AFGE strongly believes that the time has come for Congressional and White House negotiators to recognize that the stalemate and apparent absence of meaningful dialogue since DHS funding lapsed more than one month ago are not advancing the respective policy goals of the two sides and yet are inflicting real harm on DHS employees. AFGE is also deeply disappointed that Congress has not, by all appearances, treated the spending impasse as an urgent matter.

Our members employed by these DHS agencies are feeling the pain, as they did last fall during the 43-day government-wide funding lapse. The families of more than a few of our members are turning to food banks for assistances and reaching out to their banks, mortgage lenders and landlords, and credit card companies for relief. AFGE knows of at least one instance in which a TSO sold plasma to help make ends meet. And with less than a month to go before 2025 federal and state tax returns are due, it is anyone's guess how unpaid DHS workers will meet their annual tax obligations in a timely manner.

Since the funding lapse started, AFGE has done everything within its power to highlight for you and your staff the plight of our members who have been forced to work without pay at the nation's airports, ports of entry, Coast Guard facilities, and FEMA offices, and the significant negative consequences that will ensue if the current spending impasse persists. I imagine that you and certainly most of your colleagues encounter our members every week when passing through an airport on the way to and from the nation's capital. The Congress cannot and must not continue turning a blind eye to their pain.

The next scheduled pay date for these affected workers is Friday, March 27. Affected DHS employees will once again go unpaid unless Congress acts before the end of next week. We cannot afford to wait any longer to act. These dedicated public servants need relief now.

Make no mistake about it. AFGE strongly supports the effort to reach a funding compromise that erects common sense guardrails on DHS. Indeed, we have a direct moral interest in seeing this happen because one of our own members was killed in January in the tragedy involving DHS that in no small part precipitated the current impasse. But in the meantime, Congress needs to pay the tens of thousands DHS employees who have gone unpaid for almost two months. Enactment of a short-term measure to reopen DHS for a mutually agreeable period would represent a reset for negotiators, giving them the time and space to resolve, ideally in a spirit of



bipartisanship and goodwill, differences over how best to improve accountability and oversight of those agencies. Our members deserve nothing less.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Everett B. Kelley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized "E" and a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Everett B. Kelley
National President