



Eric Bunn Sr.
National Secretary-Treasurer

Dr. Everett B. Kelley
National President

Jeremy A. Lannan
NVP for Women & Fair Practices

6B/C45

May 28, 2020

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Re: COVID-19 at Food Safety and Inspection Service

Dear Secretary Perdue:

I write on behalf of the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE), representing the roughly 6,500 Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) Employees. As you know, AFGE fought hard to obtain sufficient personal protective equipment (PPE) for all federal employees who are exposed to COVID-19, including but not limited to N95 respirators for the Department's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) employees. We are happy that the majority of the employees at FSIS now have access to PPE. However, I am contacting you today regarding another issue.

On April 7, 2020, I wrote FSIS Administrator Paul Kiecker requesting that he engage with the Union on all issues regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. As of today, I have received no response from him. In fact, newspaper reports suggest strongly that this Agency is attempting to conceal the number of infected employees within the plants. I am certain that you are aware of the seriousness of this situation, and that four (4) Food Inspectors have already died from COVID-19.

We must work together to make sure that FSIS is doing all that it can to prevent further death and illness from workplace exposure to COVID-19. To that end, I formally request that we begin regular communication between your office and mine, and our designees, at the soonest possible moment. Our members need to know what the Agency is doing to protect them, the mission and the public, and in order for that to occur, we request briefings on a weekly basis, if not more often.

In addition, please consider this a formal request for all information regarding the number of positive COVID cases and the plant locations at which they occurred.

In order for the agency to operate in the safest and most effective manner during this pandemic, it is imperative that front line workers be given the opportunity to share their perspective and the knowledge they have acquired in the course of carrying out their duties in the



plants. This kind of communication should also include an open dialogue about the extent of the spread of COVID-19 within the Agency and the industry.

I greatly appreciate your time and attention to the requests made herein. If you have any questions please contact me through my assistant, Ms. Wanda Manson at 202-639-6438. Ms. Paula Schelling, the Acting National Joint Council President, will also be a point of contact in addressing all of AFGE's requests to FSIS. Ms. Schelling can be contacted at 262-492-3704 and Paula.Schelling@usda.gov.

I look forward to hearing from you soon. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Everett B. Kelley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping "y" at the end.

Everett B. Kelley
AFGE National President