



# AMERICAN FEDERATION OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES, AFL-CIO

**Eric Bunn Sr.**  
*National Secretary-Treasurer*

**Dr. Everett B. Kelley**  
*National President*

**Jeremy A. Lannan**  
*NVP for Women & Fair Practices*

May 27, 2020

Senator Richard C. Shelby  
Chairman, Senate Appropriations  
Committee  
S-128 U.S. Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Patrick J. Leahy  
Ranking Member, Senate Appropriations  
Committee  
S-128 U.S. Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Shelly Moore Capito  
Chairwoman, Homeland Security  
Subcommittee Senate Appropriations  
Committee  
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Jon Tester  
Ranking Member, Homeland Security  
Subcommittee Senate Appropriations  
Committee  
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Shelby, Chairwoman Capito and Ranking Members Leahy and Tester::

On behalf of the American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO, (AFGE) which represents more than 700,000 federal employees who serve the American people in 70 different agencies, including more than 14,500 employees of the U. S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) agency, I write with respect to the informal notice given by the agency's Deputy Director that more than half of the agency's 18,700 employees may be furloughed beginning in July 2020. The agency claims that a reduction in fee revenue caused at least in part by the COVID-19 pandemic is the rationale for these threatened furloughs.

Furloughs of this magnitude will undoubtedly cripple the agency's ability to carry out its mission. With a loss of nearly 11,000 employees, work and visitor visa petitions, asylum and citizenship/naturalization applications, green cards, and refugee applications will not be processed. USCIS plays an extremely important role in facilitating lawful immigration, helping immigrants attain a legal status as permanent residents and if they meet all criteria, eventually becoming U.S. citizens.

The agency's calculation is that to prevent these furloughs, Congress must appropriate a supplement of \$1.2 billion, \$571 million for the remainder of the current fiscal year, plus an additional \$650 million for the start of Fiscal Year 2021. This amount would compensate the agency solely for the amount already budgeted for operational needs and to continue to meet payroll for the nearly 11,000 federal employees currently under threat of furlough. While the COVID-19 pandemic has had an enormous negative impact on our nation's economy, it is important that USCIS continue its capacity for administering legal immigration processes. Without this supplemental appropriation, this capacity will be profoundly undermined.



Senate Appropriations Committee  
May 27, 2020  
Page Two

The employees of USCIS are middle class Americans who live and work in communities across the nation. They take great pride in the mission of their agency. They earn modest salaries in return for public service and cannot support themselves and their families if they lose their incomes due to furloughs.

I urge you in the strongest possible terms to respond to the USCIS request for a supplemental appropriation of \$1.2 billion for the remainder of the Fiscal Year 2020 and the beginning of Fiscal Year 2021. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Ms. Julie Tippens, AFGE's Deputy Director of Legislation at (202) 412-6728 or [julie.tippens@afge.org](mailto:julie.tippens@afge.org).

Sincerely,

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

Everett B. Kelley  
National President