



AMERICAN FEDERATION OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES, AFL-CIO

Dr. Everett B. Kelley
National Secretary-Treasurer

J. David Cox, Sr.
National President

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384889

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Dear Representative:

On behalf of the more than 700,000 federal and District of Columbia employees represented by the American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO (AFGE), I write to congratulate you on your election to Congress and to acquaint you with the unique challenges and issues the men and women of AFGE ask you to address during the 116th Congress.

First, as I write, we are in the 13th day of a government shutdown, and it is unclear either when or how it will come to an end. Hundreds of thousands of AFGE-represented federal employees are being deprived not only of their paychecks, but also of their ability to do their jobs providing important services to their fellow Americans. The situation is unconscionable, and the lack of regard for the suffering of federal employees and their families makes our members feel like pawns. Please know that federal employees are real middle and working class people with real families, real bills to pay, and real responsibilities to fulfill.

We ask that these facts remain at the front of your minds as you work to help resolve this impasse. As such, we formally ask you to support H.R. 21, the "Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2019." This legislation provides temporary funding for the Department of Homeland Security and funding for the remainder of fiscal year 2019 for the other six agencies affected by the shutdown. Passage of H.R. 21 reopens the government and allows Congress and the administration to conduct debate over border security issues under circumstances that avoid causing undue hardship for federal employees and their families.

AFGE's goals for the 116th Congress include, first and foremost, ensuring that federal employees receive the modest 1.9% pay adjustment for 2019 that was passed by the Senate and received bipartisan support in the House last year. This amount is below the 2.1% nationwide increase called for in the Federal Employees Pay Comparability Act (FEPCA) but would go a long way toward helping federal workers maintain living standards and help agencies recruit and retain the high quality federal workforce America deserves. This adjustment is included in H.R. 21, and we urge you to support this adjustment in the bill or in any other legislation that includes this provision.

In the period after the financial crisis a decade ago, several laws were enacted that reduced federal employees' retirement benefits, cancelled or all but eliminated annual pay adjustments, and imposed unpaid furloughs on employees of some agencies. The aggregate loss over ten years totaled approximately \$200 billion. Federal employees played no role in the housing bubble and financial malfeasance that led to the crisis, and the fact that they were forced to relinquish so much of their compensation was never justified. It is time to repeal the laws that reduced federal employee compensation and reinstate the standards that prevailed prior to 2013.



During the 116th Congress, there was a concerted effort by some to radically alter the laws that protect our civil service system from corruption and politicization. It is a mistake to think of the merit system that underlies our civil service as protecting federal employees from legitimate discipline or performance-based actions. Merit-system based civil service laws protect the American people and their government from the ravages of corruption, politicization, and favoritism and we ask that you support federal employees and legislation to restore the merit system in the 116th Congress.

Federal employees' collective bargaining and other union rights are just as important as the merit system in providing a foundation for good government and an apolitical civil service. The last Congress entertained several bills that would have all but eliminated our union's ability to represent those who have voted for union representation. The President issued Executive Orders that tried to effectuate what failed to pass in the Congress, but it is important that members of the new Congress take a firm stand in favor of federal employees' right to union representation and collective bargaining.

Finally, there are a few extremely important matters on which AFGE hopes to make substantial progress with the new Congress. One issue of particular importance involves the Transportation Security Administration. When the Department of Homeland Security was established, Transportation Security Officers working for the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) were explicitly made "second class" federal employees, with fewer union rights, an inferior pay system, and no access to the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB). This second-rate status has not only harmed the agency, it has led to abysmal morale and high turnover among the workforce. Elevating Transportation Security Officers to full civil service status is of the highest priority for AFGE.

As National President of AFGE, I represent federal employees in every Congressional District and State. The federal workforce is America's workforce. Federal employees keep America running. We ask that you help us do our jobs and end the government shutdown. Please support H.R. 21, the "Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2019."

We look forward to working with you in the 116th Congress. For additional information or questions please contact, Alethea Predeoux at alethea.predeoux@afge.org.

Sincerely,



J. David Cox, Sr.
National President