



INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF PROFESSIONAL & TECHNICAL ENGINEERS AFL-CIO & CLC

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May 11, 2020

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Hon. Nancy Pelosi, Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Hon. Kevin McCarthy, Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Hon. Mitch McConnell, Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-230, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Hon. Charles Schumer, Minority Leader
United States Senate
S-221, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leaders Schumer & McCarthy:

As the executive officers of the International Federation of Professional & Technical Engineers (IFPTE), we are writing regarding your ongoing efforts to craft a second CARES package and to outline the priorities of IFPTE's diverse membership. In that regard, IFPTE appreciates your consideration of the following recommendations:

State and Local Governments

- **Provide direct aid to States and Localities:** The first CARES Act package provided for \$150B in aid to States, which was a start, but is far from the aid needed to deal with extreme budget shortfalls. IFPTE urges Congress to create a \$500 billion emergency Appropriations state stabilization fund consistent with what has been [recommended by the National Governors Association](#), and another \$500 billion for City & Local governments consistent with the request [made by the National League of Cities](#), to replace lost revenue due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Fully fund the Obamacare Medicaid program:** In all States (including those that opted out), on an emergency basis through fiscal year 2020, to cover the uninsured in all States during this crisis.
- **Increase in the Federal Medical Assistance Percentage Program (FMAP) rate by another 15 percentage points:** A 15% increase on top of the 6.2% increase in the FMAP rate to States for Medicaid coverage in FFCRA, retroactive back to January 1, 2020, is critical for States overwhelmed by the pandemic and the economic crisis.
- **Repeal the CARES Act spending restriction on States and Localities** – The CARES Act limits the spending ability of federally approved State and Local government aid to only COVID-19 related unbudgeted costs. This ties the hands of State and Local governments from allocating spending toward critical taxpayer services in their communities.
- **Include the bipartisan Coronavirus Community Relief Act (HR 6467)** - Sponsored by Congressman Joe Neguse and Senator Martin Heinrich that will provide for an immediate \$250 billion in local stabilization funds for cities and localities with populations under 500,000.

Direct Aid to Working Families

- **Provide a one-time retroactive 2019 tax cut for middle class households:** For family incomes below \$250,000 to help working families get through the serious challenges.

- **Provide monthly, recurring direct cash support for working families:** In the form of \$2,000 for individuals with income up to \$120,000.
- **Keep working people on their employer's payroll:** With record post-war unemployment and state unemployment systems and support overwhelmed, a federal guarantee to provide three months of workers' salaries up to \$100,000 would keep people employed and attached to the labor market, get support to workers immediately, and support businesses.
- **COBRA health insurance payments:** Include the Worker Health Coverage Protection Act (HR 6514), authored by House Education and Labor Committee Chairman Bobby Scott, to provide 100% of a laid off or furloughed workers health premiums.
- **Student debt relief:** Temporary suspension of payments and interest is a start, but the workforce includes many skilled workers with undergraduate/graduate degrees with mortgage-size student loan debt and outrageous interest rates. IFPTE supports student debt relief or forgiveness to ease the financial burden on working families and encourage local spending and economic growth to get our economy back on track.
- **Access to testing, treatment, and health care for all working people:** Provide federal payments to health care providers and allow states the flexibility to cover all uninsured people during the pandemic, regardless of immigration status.
- **Hazardous Duty Pay:** Provide hazardous duty pay differentials and environmental differential pay for federal employees whose duties require them to report to work during the COVID-19 pandemic and risk exposure to the virus. Because workers are in immediate danger of exposure, and current protocols have no guarantees of protection, employees required to report to work during the COVID-19 health crisis should be provided hazardous duty pay. IFPTE is particularly pleased with the premium pay proposal being championed by Senate Minority Leader Schumer and Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee Ranking Senator Peters to provide those in the federal, public, and private sectors with premium pay in the form of an additional \$13 per hour, to be capped at \$25K through the end of 2020. IFPTE fully supports such a proposal.

Aerospace and Private Sector Workers

- **Federal assistance oversight and accountability:** The Federal Reserve's unprecedented and direct intervention in the bond market has allowed the Boeing Company to raise \$25 billion by selling what are essentially junk bonds insured by the American taxpayer. The Fed's intervention has also allowed Boeing to undermine and maneuver free from the modest conditions that Congress included in the CARES Act to protect domestic jobs and balance workers' and the public's interests with shareholders' interests, including requirements preventing the company to buy back stock, pay dividends, and reward corporate executives with huge bonuses. IFPTE urges Congress to apply the same restrictions in the CARES Act to the Federal Reserve policy.
- **Extended paid leave:** Employers must provide employer-paid time off for temporary suspended operations related to COVID-19.
- **Employee health and safety measures and OSHA Emergency Temporary Standard:** IFPTE supports language that requires employers in industries defined by the DHS Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency as "Essential Critical Infrastructure Sectors," including the critical manufacturing sector and the defense industrial base sector, to commit to implementing OSHA's "hierarchy of controls" and following CDC guidance to minimize risk of exposure to COVID-19 at all worksites, as is consistent with employers' general duty to provide their employees with a workplace free from recognized hazards. In meeting these commitments, employers should negotiate with employees' unions on safety policies and procedures. Further, IFPTE supports House Education and Labor Committee Chairman Bobby Scott's COVID-19 Protect Every Worker Act (H.R. 6559) which mandates OSHA issue an Emergency Temporary Standard for infectious disease that applies broadly to all workers who are frontline, essential, and reporting to their worksites.
- **Carrot and stick measures to ensure companies prioritize the maintenance of their U.S. workforce and insourcing work:** Employers like Boeing continue to outsource engineering and tech jobs to places like Russia, Ukraine, and India. As unemployment levels now rival those during the Great Depression, we want to ensure strong language in the next bill to prioritize maintaining U.S. jobs during the pending layoffs. Additionally, as a condition of further federal

assistance, employers should be required to spend money to “insource” certain functions and begin rebuilding its workforce in the U.S.

- **Support for aerospace R&D and aviation infrastructure development:** In order to support future growth in U.S. aerospace jobs, federal investments must be made in aerospace research, development, and infrastructure modernization. These resources should be focused on innovative technologies, such as new energy-efficiency technologies and low-carbon aviation, to give U.S. manufacturers and their customers a competitive advantage during the recovery of the aviation sector. Top-tier manufacturers and suppliers receiving federal funds should be obligated to recruit back laid off engineering talent and charge them with leading new designs in aviation efficiencies, infrastructure, and technologies that will promote the U.S. industry in a highly competitive and rapidly changing global economy.

Federal Sector Workers

- **Worker Representation:** Restore labor-management relations and communication as agencies work to quickly implement new policies and workplace procedures in response to the COVID-19 crisis.
- **Presumption of Worksite Illness:** Amend the Federal Employee Compensation Act (FECA), the law that governs workers’ compensation for federal employees, to provide an automatic presumption of workplace illness for employees who contract COVID-19 through the performance of their duties. A presumption of workplace illness will give federal employees the direct ability to make a FECA claim without a lengthy denial and appeals process when COVID-19 is contracted through the performance of their duties.
- **Weather and Safety Leave:** Provide weather and safety leave for all federal employees who are not able to perform their duties remotely and are prohibited from reporting to work during the COVID-19 crisis.
- **Maximize Telework:** Departments and agencies must assign federal employees, including essential employees, to perform their duties remotely via telework to minimize the spread of COVID-19. Essential federal employees who cannot perform their essential duties remotely will be required to report to work with hazardous duty pay.
- **Halt federal government agencies from privatizing federal jobs during the COVID-19 pandemic:** At a time when Congress is approving trillions of dollars in aid legislation that is largely laser-focused on preserving jobs, it is incredulous that federal government entities like the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) are moving full steam ahead to privatize hundreds of good-paying, middle-income IT jobs. To add insult to injury, TVA admits that this planned privatization will cost more than keeping the jobs in-house, and these jobs could even go overseas. IFPTE urges Congress to continue to put workers first by adding language in the next COVID-19 relief bill to prevent all federal government agencies and entities, including the TVA, from outsourcing/privatizing jobs during this crisis. Such a provision would not cost American taxpayers a dime but would preserve these jobs.
- **Include S. 3583/HR 6246, The Protecting Collective Bargaining and Official Time for Federal Workers Act:** The President’s Executive Orders (13836, 13837 and 13839) geared toward eliminating the ability of unions to represent their members also resulted in the elimination of any semblance of labor-management relationships at many government agencies. In fact, the EOs have only emboldened management in many federal agencies to create a toxic relationship between the workers and upper management. It is no surprise that it is the very same agencies who were all too eager to implement the EOs that have also failed to respond effectively to the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, at DOJ’s Executive Office of Immigration Review, the agency’s exclusion of any consultation with the union and lack of communication and clear guidance during this state of emergency has led to extreme levels of anxiety within the union membership and for all court personnel, the continuation of some in-person hearings that can be conducted remotely, and operations that endanger federal workers as well as the public. Similarly, at SSA, the agency refused to postpone in-person hearings and has gone so far as to refuse a recommendation by the union to allow those most vulnerable to COVID to do their hearings remotely. It is this kind of mismanagement that has been emboldened by the EOs. Along those lines, IFPTE urges Congress to repeal these dangerous EOs by including S.3583/HR6246 into the next relief bill.
- **Revoke Trump Executive Order 13843, which politicized the hiring of federal Administrative Law Judges (ALJs) by including the bipartisan ALJ Competitive Service Restoration Act (HR 2429, S 2348):** Social Security disability applications, veterans claims,

and housing assistance claims are expected to increase due to the COVID-19 virus. Given the expected spike in cases that will be heard by federal ALJs due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is critical that the American public be assured that these life and death decisions be determined by a truly independent adjudicator – an ALJ. The most vulnerable among us, veterans and all constituents need qualified, impartial judges to hear these claims. Including the bipartisan legislation in the 4th COVID relief bill will preserve due process protections for the American public by restoring the fair and unbiased OPM administered hiring process for federal agency Administrative Law Judges (ALJs). Additionally, IFPTE urges the inclusion of the following language: “Section 556 (b) of title 5, United States Code, is amended to add the following language at the end of (b) (3) “except, the Presiding Officer at a hearing for the initial on the record determination before the Social Security Administration shall be the Administrative Law Judge appointed under Section 3105 of this Title.”

As we have previously written to Congress, when crafting and approving these much-needed aid packages, IFPTE continues to urge lawmaker to put workers first, second, third and last. We stand ready to assist you and your staff as we move toward another relief package aimed at mitigating the fallout of this crisis.

Sincerely,



Paul Shearon
President



Matthew Biggs
Secretary-Treasurer/Legislative Director

