

October 23, 2014

Hon. Barbara Mikulski, Chairman  
Appropriations Committee  
United States Senate  
S.128 The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

Hon. Richard Durbin, Chairman  
Defense Appropriations Subcommittee  
United States Senate  
122 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Mikulski and Chairman Durbin,

As you work to craft the final Fiscal Year 2015 (FY15) appropriations bill, the undersigned unions are writing to bring an important issue involving Department of Defense (DoD) civilian employee travel to your attention. Specifically this letter is to ask for your support in blocking the further implementation of cuts to the long-term temporary duty (TDY) per diem, lodging and incidental expenses for DoD workers on long term travel. We ask that you do so through a defund provision in the FY15 Omnibus appropriations measure, or continuing resolution.

The DoD announced last December that they intended to cut by 25% the lodging and per diem reimbursements to DoD workers on travel for over 30 days, and by 45% for travel in excess of 180 days. The DoD also announced the elimination of several reimbursable incidental expenses for civilian workers on long-term TDY, including the \$2 a day laundry expense and ATM charges for using the government mandated credit card. In response many of us issued written comments this summer raising concerns over these proposed cuts. For example, we asked what the department's expectations were for the quality of lodging for federal workers on long term TDY if the DoD is paying only 75% of the current rate in places such as DC, San Diego, San Francisco, etc... We questioned the department's logic in slashing per diem by a quarter for the very workers who volunteer to spend long periods of time away from their families and homes in order to help support our troops. We also questioned the DoD's insistence that workers pay out of their pocket for the cost of using the government credit card, even though DoD workers are required to use that card while on travel.

Others outside of the labor community also have serious concerns with this proposal. On October 10<sup>th</sup> a bipartisan group of 28 House members, led by Washington State Congressman, Derek Kilmer, wrote a letter to DoD arguing that, "the proposal to reduce per diem allowance by 25 percent for TDY periods longer than 30 days and by 45 percent for TDY periods longer than 180 days would cause an undue burden on a workforce that has already been stricken with furloughs, government shutdowns, and three years of pay freezes and the private sector that is still rebounding from the economic recession." In addition to several labor organizations endorsing that letter, the Federal Managers Association, Marriot, Hilton and the U.S. Travel Association also supported the letter.

As it stands now, the DoD is moving full steam ahead in unilaterally implementing these changes. The cuts to incidentals has already been implemented as of October 1st, and the lodging and per diem cuts take effect on November 1<sup>st</sup>. While some components have said that they will bargain with their unions, many are doing so post implementation, or intend to do it after implementation. Others, like the Army Corps of Engineers, are not even recognizing their legal obligation to bargain with their unions.

We have been told that one of the justifications for the reduction is the belief that the current policy does not include any incentive for the traveler to save government funds. While we take issue with the underlying premise, the outcome of the Department's proposal is to force trivial savings in the travel budget by taking money from the personal pockets of federal workers who volunteer to travel for extended periods of time, rather than addressing the incentive issue directly. We believe that this is a misguided solution to solve a perceived problem. Furthermore, if the DoD had addressed this matter pre-decisionally with key stakeholder groups like labor, as is called for in Executive Order 13522, then there is a strong likelihood that more reasonable, and mutually agreed upon efficiencies in the travel budget could have been achieved.

The DoD has overstepped in attempting to achieve savings by requiring their workers to personally pay for decent lodging, meals and even for such things as laundry. This is misguided and unfair to the workforce. We ask that you block any further implementation of this wrongheaded proposal by defunding the implementation of the TDY long-term lodging and per diem cuts for travel over 30 and 180 days, and the elimination of reimbursable incidental expenses.

Should you or your staff have any questions regarding this request please contact International Federation of Professional & Technical Engineers (IFPTE) legislative director, Matt Biggs at (202) 239-4880.

Thank you.

American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE)  
Association of Civilian Technicians (ACT)  
International Association of Machinists & Aerospace Workers (IAMAW)  
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW)  
International Federation of Professional Technical Engineers (IFPTE)  
International Organization of Masters, Mates & Pilots (MM&P)  
Laborers' International Union of North America (LIUNA)  
Metal Trades Department (MTD), AFL-CIO  
National Association of Government Employees (NAGE)  
National Federation of Federal Employees (NFFE)  
Professional Aviation Safety Specialists (PASS)  
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United Power Trades Organization (UPTO)