

FEDERAL WORKERS ALLIANCE

COLLECTIVELY REPRESENTING OVER 550,000 FEDERAL AND POSTAL WORKERS

March 11, 2024

United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

We write to you as the executive officers of the Federal Workers Alliance (FWA), a labor coalition representing over 550,000 Federal and Postal workers, to urge you to vote in opposition of H.R. 6276, the Utilizing Space Efficiently and Improving Technologies Act of 2023, also known as the USE IT Act.

As you know, the USE IT Act would direct the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the General Services Administration (GSA) to establish standard methodologies to measure occupancy in federal buildings and federally leased space. The bill also requires federal agencies to work with GSA to implement technologies to track occupancy and usage rates of federal buildings and to provide reports to Congress on the collected data. GSA is then required by the act to take actions against agencies in federal buildings that report less than 60 percent usage rates, such as consolidating building space with other agencies or selling excess building space.

In setting an arbitrary number, such as 60 percent, the bill fails to account for ongoing strategic planning, current changes, and future trends in accordance with the federal government's space requirements. Making premature or not fully evaluated rearrangements of federal space for the sake of satisfying an arbitrary number is often a costly and wasteful endeavor, especially if the same or equivalent space must be repurchased or leased at a higher rate in the future. It is better to leave these decisions to the authorizations and appropriations processes within Congress, and allow those decisions to overlay with GSA and the agencies themselves to ensure that decisions are based on strategy and economics, rather than an arbitrary number.

The FWA further opposes the USE IT Act because OMB and GSA, in addition to other federal agencies, currently measure occupancy and usage rates within federally owned and leased buildings. Since 2020, new technologies have been piloted to collect this data and GSA reports that it has already consolidated federal spaces based on occupancy rates and usage data. GSA is expected to continue to track this data and consolidate office space consistent with the agency's current practices, therefore rendering the USE IT Act unnecessary.

OMB, GSA, and all federal agencies have been adjusting for the efficient use of office space since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and will continue to do so as agencies establish and implement policies relating to in-person work for federal employees. Agency leaders and federal employees alike now have a profound understanding of how they can best utilize building space and remote work. It is our position that the USE IT Act will only create obstacles for agencies in carrying out their mission in service to the American public.

Thank you for considering our request. We are available to provide further information about our opposition to the USE IT Act of 2023. If you have any questions, please contact FWA legislative co-chairs Faraz Khan at fkhan@ifpte.org or Steve Lenkart at slenkart@nffe.org.

Sincerely,

Federal Education Association (FEA)
International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF)
International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE)
International Plate Printers, Die Stampers, Plate Makers and Engravers of North America (PPDSPM&E of N.A.)
National Association of Agriculture Employees (NAAE)
National Association of Government Employees, SEIU (NAGE)
National Federation of Federal Employees (NFFE-IAM)
National Weather Service Employees Organization (NWSEO)
Patent Office Professional Association (POPA)
Professional Aviation Safety Specialists (PASS)