



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

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MATTHEW S. BIGGS
President

GAY HENSON
Secretary-Treasurer

December 21, 2022

Dear Senator,

As the executive officers of the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE), a labor union representing upwards of 90,000 workers in the federal, public, and private sectors, we are writing to express our support for the Omnibus Consolidated Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2023, Senate Amendment to H.R. 2617. This legislation funds and authorizes critical government functions and essential public services for FY23, supports working families, strengthens our national defense, and advances national economic priorities. We urge you to vote to pass the omnibus legislation before federal government funding expires on December 23.

The \$1.7 trillion omnibus package under consideration this week provides considerable benefits to working people and their families throughout the country, including those represented by IFPTE. This legislation provides resources to allow our government to enforce laws that protect working people, enable economic prosperity, provide a social safety net and government activities that promote a decent standard of living and public safety, support our national defense and economic security, and invest in innovation and economic development.

We support the omnibus bill's increases in discretionary federal funding in critical programs and agencies, particularly the bill's inclusion of priorities that are significant to IFPTE members and working Americans, including the following:

- **A \$25 million increase to the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), for a total budget of \$299.2 million for FY23.** This 9% increase over the previous year is significantly less the \$100 million IFPTE and other labor unions requested and what the NLRB justified as necessary to keep pace with a high volume of enforcement actions, unfair labor practice (ULP) filings, and adjudication of disputes, and to make up for a decade of flat funding levels. However, the omnibus bill provides enough funding to allow the NLRB to avoid furloughs and continue operations at a time when union representation petitions and ULP complaints are increasing and working Americans are exercising their democratic rights to form and join unions.
- **A \$785 million increase to Social Security Administration (SSA), for an SSA limitation on administrative expenses of \$14.1 billion for FY23.** This 6% increase over the previous year's budget helps keep pace with inflation and softens a decade of declining budgets. While IFPTE and the President's budget request had asked for funding to fully address staffing shortages and service disruptions, the omnibus bill will provide resources to support retirement security and disability benefits for Americans.
- **Language sponsored by Senator Maria Cantwell to allow the Boeing 737 MAX-10 and MAX-7 variants the time necessary for FAA certification.** This provision removes crew alert system requirements for these two aircraft variants but adds a requirement for additional safety enhancements for all MAX variants. This safety-focused language also supports our members, the flying public, and our nation's export-driven aircraft manufacturing industry.
- **A \$300 million increase for the Department of Energy's Office of Nuclear Energy, for a budget of \$1.77 billion for FY23.** This commitment will fund R&D activities for advanced reactor projects and domestic fuel sources, help maintain current carbon-free nuclear energy generation, and support waste storage solutions.

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- **A \$1.34 billion increase for NASA, for a budget of \$25.4 billion for FY23.** This represents a 5.6% increase over the previous year, with significant NASA-requested resources for space operations and exploration. While we applaud the funding increase, we note with concern that increases in several key programs do not uniformly match inflation nor meet the agency's budget request.
- **A \$2 million increase to the Federal Labor Relations Authority (FLRA), for a budget of \$29.4 million for FY23.** This 7% increase over the previous year will help support technology investments, maintain staffing levels, and improve case management efficiency for this independent agency that protects federal employee labor rights and facilitates stability in labor-management relations in the federal government.

While we unreservedly request the enactment of the Consolidated Appropriations Act for FY23, we are disappointed that the bill fails to provide the appropriate funding levels for federal agencies that workers, retirees, and their dependents count on. In particular, we regret that Congressional negotiators did not provide the amounts requested in President Biden's budget request for a number of federal agencies, including the SSA, the NLRB, NASA, the Legal Services Corporation, and other agencies. For too many important programs, the FY23 budget offered in the omnibus bill does not keep up with inflation nor address years – in some cases decades – of underfunding. We will continue our advocacy for federal funding needed to make up insufficient budget levels as we look forward to the appropriations process for FY24.

We are also disappointed that Congress did not include language in the omnibus bill to prevent the politicization of the federal civil service and guard against the creation of a patronage system, which the previous administration attempted to do through an executive order to unilaterally move competitive service positions into the excepted service. Congress also missed an opportunity to reauthorize Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) in the omnibus. Since TAA lapsed on June 30, 2022, some 40,000 American workers have gone without access to two years of job retraining benefits and income support that they would have received under the program. Similarly, failure to extend Federal Employees Compensation Program's COVID-19 presumption language for federal employees, set to expire on January 27, 2023, and also include the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (H.R. 1065/S. 4431) leaves workers vulnerable when they need health and safety benefits and job protections from discriminatory employment practices. These issues will be among IFPTE's legislative priorities at the start of 2023.

Finally, we recognize and applaud Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Patrick Leahy (D-VT) and Ranking Member Richard Shelby (R-AL) for their public service and for their commitment to bipartisanship, and for reaching an agreement on the Consolidated Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2023 before they retire from the Senate at the conclusion of this Congress. Our union wishes them and their families good health and a happy well-earned retirement.

Thank you for considering our request. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact IFPTE Legislative Director Faraz Khan at (202) 239-4892.

Sincerely,



Matthew S. Biggs
IFPTE President



Gay Henson
IFPTE Secretary-Treasurer