

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 17, 2019

The Honorable John Kennedy
Chairman
Subcommittee on Financial Services and
General Government
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Christopher Coons
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Financial Services and
General Government
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Kennedy and Ranking Member Coons:

As you develop fiscal year 2020 appropriations legislation, we strongly reject the president's request for a pay freeze for federal employees and instead request a 3.6-percent increase in rates of basic pay for employees under the statutory pay systems (as defined in section 5302 of title 5, United States Code).

Raising our workers' wages will reassure our nation's commitment to public service, while addressing the alarming rate of attrition among our federal workforce. Federal wages have lagged far behind the private sector and have failed to keep up with the rate of inflation. Further, over 800,000 federal workers were affected by the recent government shutdown, lowering morale and shaking their confidence in our civil service system. We need to continue to improve compensation in order to help the government recruit and retain top-quality workforce, particularly during a time with increased competition from private-sector employers.

Federal employees have lost billions of dollars in wages due to sequestration and a three-year pay freeze. In the past six years, federal employees' wages were raised 7.3 percent on average. In comparison, according to the Department of Labor, private industry wages increased 12.1 percent on average over the same period. Federal employees deserve to be fairly compensated for the important work they do on behalf of our country.

Our 3.6-percent increase request is based on the Bureau of Labor Statistics Employment Cost Index, and then adjusting those figures to account for federal employee benefits and cost of living adjustments. This total amount is also designed to address the shortfall in pay that federal workers faced due to pay freezes in recent years.

We therefore request the following bill text:

Sec. __. (a) The adjustment in rates of basic pay for employees under the statutory pay systems that takes effect in fiscal year 2020 under section 5303 of title 5, United States Code, shall be an increase of 3.6 percent, and the overall average percentage of the adjustments taking effect in such fiscal year under sections 5304 and 5304a of such title 5 shall be an increase of 3.6 percent (with comparability payments to be determined and allocated among pay localities by the President). Adjustments under the preceding sentence shall also apply to civilian employees in the Department of Homeland Security and in the Department of Defense. All adjustments under this subsection shall be effective as of the first day of the first applicable pay period beginning on or after January 1, 2020.

(b) Notwithstanding section [], the adjustment in rates of basic pay for the statutory pay systems that take place in fiscal year 2020 under sections 5344 and 5348 of title 5, United States Code, shall be no less than the percentages in subsection (a) as employees in the same location whose rates of basic pay are adjusted pursuant to the statutory pay systems under section 5303, 5304, and 5304a of title 5, United States Code. Prevailing rate employees at locations where there are no employees whose pay is increased pursuant to sections 5303, 5304, and 5304a of such title 5 and prevailing rate employees described in section 5343(a)(5) of such title 5 shall be considered to be located in the pay locality designated as "Rest of U.S." pursuant to section 5304 of such title 5 for purposes of this subsection.

(c) Funds used to carry out this section shall be paid from appropriations, which are made to each applicable department or agency for salaries and expenses for fiscal year 2020.

Thank you for your consideration of this issue. Federal employees have sacrificed far more than their fair share and they deserve to be fairly compensated for the important work they do on behalf of our country.

Sincerely,



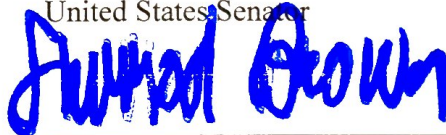
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United States Senator



RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senator



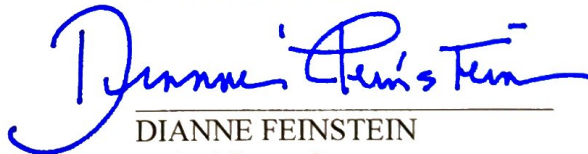
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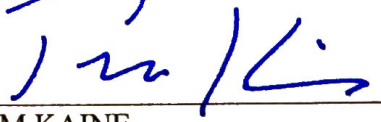
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