

May 4, 2020

United States Congress  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Member of Congress:

As we enter Public Service Recognition Week (PSRW), May 3-9, I write on behalf of the National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association (NARFE) to draw attention to some of the outstanding contributions and sacrifices federal employees have made in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. I ask that you keep in mind the dedication displayed by millions of public servants – at the federal, state and local level – across the country; not only this week, but also in the weeks, months and years ahead; not only in words, but also through your actions as an elected representative.

Here are just a few highlights of civil servants' response to the COVID-19 outbreak:

- Even as many federal workers telework, some perform essential jobs that cannot be done remotely. Federal employees in those roles have been exposed to a greater risk of infection, and **more than 10,000 have tested positive for the coronavirus.**<sup>1</sup>
- Doctors and nurses in our nation's Veterans Affairs health system have cared for nearly 9,000 individuals with COVID-19<sup>2</sup> amidst a shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE).<sup>3</sup>
- Nearly 630,000 postal workers continue to risk exposure to COVID-19, doing their jobs to keep the economy operating and delivering essential supplies and medicine. More than 1,600 have tested positive for the virus.<sup>4</sup>
- Correctional officers with the Federal Bureau of Prisons continue to face heightened risks as COVID-19 spreads through federal prisons. More than 350 of them have tested positive for the virus.<sup>5</sup>
- Federal law enforcement officers and firefighters, who already face inherent dangers due to their roles, now have the added risk of exposure to coronavirus.
- Transportation Security Officers (TSOs) and Custom and Border Protection officers continue to put themselves at risk to ensure safe air travel and secure borders, even as flights and border crossings have declined. More than 500 TSOs have tested positive for the coronavirus.<sup>6</sup>
- Air traffic controllers continue to work in tight quarters that pose a higher risk of infection to make sure our aviation system operates effectively.
- Federal food inspectors continue to ensure processing plants can operate and that our food supply is safe, even as nearly 140 inspectors have contracted COVID-19, and two have died of the disease.<sup>7</sup>
- The Small Business Administration processed more than \$349 billion in loans in record time and is now working on a second wave of \$310 billion in additional loans. In 2019, it processed less than \$30 billion the entire year.<sup>8</sup>

- The Internal Revenue Service sent more than 130 million economic impact payments, totaling more than \$207 billion, to Americans in less than a month.<sup>9</sup>
- Federal employees with the Department of Health and Human Services have spearheaded the federal response, as the National Institutes of Health research treatments and vaccines, and as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention track the spread of the virus and helps communities respond.
- Federal employees in agencies across the government have provided vital information, guidance, tracking and more, to respond to the crisis.<sup>10</sup>
- Countless federal workers not mentioned above continue to serve the nation through remote work, maintaining government operations amid difficult circumstances.

In the tradition of public service, our nation's federal and postal employees are doing what they do best: serving their country and their communities in the face of the COVID-19 outbreak. As you fulfill your oversight responsibilities and take legislative action in response to the current crisis and in the future, I hope you keep their service and sacrifice in mind. In a time of need, they have not hesitated to fulfill their duties and put themselves at risk to do so.

Thank you for the consideration of our views. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact NARFE's Staff Vice President for Policy and Programs Jessica Klement at [jklement@narfe.org](mailto:jklement@narfe.org).

Sincerely,



Ken Thomas  
National President

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.govexec.com/workforce/2020/04/more-10000-federal-employees-have-contracted-covid-19/164986/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/2020/05/01/veterans-affairs-adds-2000-new-coronavirus-cases-in-five-days-deaths-top-500/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2020/04/24/veterans-va-coronavirus/?arc404=true>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.govexec.com/workforce/2020/04/more-10000-federal-employees-have-contracted-covid-19/164986/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.bop.gov/coronavirus/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/politics-news/tsa-says-500-its-employees-have-tested-positive-covid-19-n1195566>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.govexec.com/workforce/2020/04/federal-inspectors-are-fearful-angry-about-trumps-order-reopen-outbreak-stricken-meat-plants/165051/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://fortune.com/2020/04/29/sba-ppp-paycheck-protection-program-loans-small-business-administration-inside-chaos/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/irs-statement-update-on-irs-operations>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.usa.gov/coronavirus>