

July 14, 2020

House Committee on Appropriations
United States Congress
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Lowey, Ranking Member Granger and members of the House Committee on Appropriations:

On behalf of the National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association (NARFE), I urge you to reconsider your decision to exclude a federal pay rate adjustment in the fiscal year 2021 Financial Services and General Government (FSGG) appropriations bill. Federal workers have been on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic response, making sacrifices for both the health and economy of this nation, and their contributions should not be ignored. We ask that Congress recognize federal workers and return to the policy of having the federal pay rate adjustment match the military pay increase in the FY21 National Defense Authorization Act.

Federal workers continue to make outstanding contributions and sacrifices in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and many continue to face a greater risk of infection due to their civil jobs. Doctors and nurses at the VA have cared for thousands of individuals with COVID-19 amidst shortages of personal protective equipment. Both the Internal Revenue Service and the Small Business Administration have distributed hundreds of billions of dollars to businesses and individuals at record speeds in response to the current economic crisis. Our knowledge and tracking of the virus would be little without the federal workers of the National Institutes of Health, the Centers for Disease Control and all the employees of the Department of Health and Human Services. Countless more federal workers continue to serve the nation through remote work, maintaining government operations amid difficult circumstances. We ought to honor their service through more than just words.

Congress approved trillions of federal dollars in response to the COVID-10 pandemic, tasking federal employees with stabilizing the economy and handling the health challenges of the virus. The House continues to vote in favor of additional relief, but it appears to have forgotten the sacrifices and hazards that federal employees face by rejecting a modest pay adjustment. Those tasked with responding to this crisis do so out of duty to their country, even with limited recognition for the danger of their work. We ask that Congress do its part to appreciate the higher risk that federal employees are facing by appropriating a federal pay rate adjustment at parity with the military pay increase.

Remaining silent on the pay raise shirks responsibility and attempts to avoid accountability for any future change in administration policy. If the FSGG bill does not specify a pay adjustment, Congress defers its authority to the president. While the president has indicated an intent to provide a 1 percent pay increase, there is no

guarantee that this policy will go into effect. As such, congressional silence is worse than a concession to the administration's current position. It represents a failure of leadership and an abrogation of authority.

For these reasons, I urge you to appropriate a modest federal pay rate adjustment in the FY21 Financial Services and General Government appropriations bill. Doing so would not only recognize the outstanding service of federal employees in the face of the COVID-19 outbreak, but also acknowledge the hazardous conditions they continue to encounter.

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.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ken Thomas', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ken Thomas
National President