



January 10, 2024

The Honorable Mike Johnson  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Minority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Johnson, Leader Schumer, Leader Jeffries and Leader McConnell:

On behalf of the National Treasury Employees Union, which represents approximately 150,000 federal employees in 35 agencies, I urge you to support America's federal employees by passing legislation to fund federal agencies at the levels necessary to meet their missions and keep the government open to provide critical services to the American people.

With the government funding set to expire for several agencies next week and the remaining agencies two weeks later, it is imperative that Congress acts to keep federal agencies open. A government shutdown would be disastrous for the country. As you know, the 35-day shutdown in 2019 cost the United States economy \$11 billion, caused significant hardship for the 800,000 federal workers who missed two paychecks, and denied critical government services to the American people. Federal employees and their families struggled with how to pay their mortgage, rent, health care, utilities, and credit card bills. Every day, I heard from members who were terrified about how they would be able to get by without their paychecks—how they would pay for their kid's college tuition or for their ailing parent's medical care. Many creditors and landlords were unwilling to work with them and expected full and prompt payment of what was owed, despite the lack of a paycheck due to the shutdown. And those who were required to report to work without pay had limited to no ability to earn additional income or obtain unemployment benefits to help them bridge the gap. You have it in your power to ensure that this does not happen again.

For years, Congress has been working to improve recruitment and retention at federal agencies, including for those individuals with hard-to-find critical skills. We all want the federal government to be a model employer and ensure that it can compete with the private sector for skilled workers. Making workers go without pay, even temporarily, does nothing to help with this effort.

We applaud the news that a top line spending agreement has been reached that is in line with the Fiscal Responsibility Act. The drastic cuts proposed in the House Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 appropriations bills would harm agencies' ability to have the staffing levels necessary to meet their missions. And cutting these critical investments would have a devastating impact on the ability of federal employees to provide the vital services the American people rely on and would leave agencies without the means to address emerging challenges and properly plan for the future.

In this same vein, we also urge you to oppose the inclusion of a fiscal commission to address the federal deficit in any FY 2024 or other spending agreement. Allowing a select group of individuals to develop a privileged set of recommendations for reducing spending as well as Social Security and Medicare that Congress would then be obliged to approve or disapprove with minimal discussion and without amendment would effectively bypass the role of a democratically elected Congress in formulating and debating legislation and tax policy. Moreover, previous fiscal commissions and super-committees have either failed to reach meaningful agreements or resulted in proposed cuts to benefits for the middle class and federal workers.

Congress should budget according to our nation's needs. That includes keeping federal agencies and programs that serve the American people adequately funded, including agencies like the IRS and CBP which generate revenue through proper enforcement of the tax code and facilitating trade and travel. It also includes keeping federal salaries, which already lag the private sector by an average of 27%, and benefits as competitive as possible to ensure a capable and qualified civil service.

Federal employees work and live in every part of the country and are proud to serve the American public. We urge you to support them and their public service by passing legislation to fully fund federal agencies for the remainder of FY 2024 in a timely manner and oppose harmful funding cuts and commissions that would hurt federal employees and working families.

Sincerely,



Doreen P. Greenwald  
National President