



## National Federation of Federal Employees, IAMAW, AFL-CIO



### NFFE-IAM Opposes Bill to Furlough Federal Workers (H.R. 270)

**Position:** H.R. 270 is a bill designed to force federal agencies to furlough federal workers for two weeks during FY 2012. This bill would accomplish this by mandating that executive branch agencies issue regulations stating whether particular federal employees will be furloughed without pay for two weeks in FY 2012. The assertion that this bill would save large sums is simply not true. The bill's mandate for new regulations would simply waste time and resources of federal agencies, requiring them to spend time writing rules for the workforce instead of providing services to the American people.

#### **Background:**

H.R. 270, would require the President of the United States, by regulation, to subject federal employees in fiscal year 2012 to two-week unpaid furloughs from their jobs unless the regulation exempts them for reasons of national security, reasons relating to the public health or safety (including effective law enforcement), or such other reasons as the President considers necessary or appropriate. NFFE-IAM strongly opposes the purpose of this bill.

The bill's primary sponsor asserted in 2010 that the bill would save \$5.5 billion; but, given the bill's express provision for unlimited exemptions, there is no guarantee that it will save any money at all that otherwise would be spent to compensate federal employee for their service to the American people. Rather, the bill's only guarantee is that federal employees would be required to divert their efforts from providing services to the American people to writing regulations about whether, when, and how the people will be further deprived of these services.

Further, it is likely that any savings that could theoretically be achieved by furloughing federal workers would be offset by increased costs in other areas. Furloughs would likely create backlogs in many vital services that federal employees provide for the American people. Veterans' prescriptions would go unfilled. Passport lines would get longer and longer. In many cases, it would require overtime of current federal employees or contractor assistance to address the backlogs created, both of which tend to be more expensive than federal employees performing the work as they do normally. In the end, the increased costs associated with furloughs would largely or fully offset proposed savings. Since this bill does not reduce the work required to be performed, the only alternative to a cost shift is that critical work simply not get done.

Contrary to inaccurate news media assertions that federal employees are vastly overpaid, government data show that skilled federal employees are paid 24 percent less than their private sector counterparts. In fact, President George W. Bush certified that federal workers are paid 23% less than private sector workers in 2008. Office of Personnel Management Director John Berry recently noted that skilled employees comprise the majority of federal workers. Only the smaller percent of federal employees who are unskilled receive slightly higher pay than their unskilled private sector counterparts, who include minimum wage workers.

The President recently stated that he will require federal agencies to limit their expenditures to ensure efficient provision of government services at the lowest possible cost and that furloughs of employees appropriately tailored in scope and duration are among the tools that agencies may use. Efficient day-to-day management of the federal workforce does not require new written regulations determining, months in advance, without regard to current circumstances, which if any particular employees will be furloughed for an arbitrarily determined two-week period. A law requiring such regulations would decrease, not increase, the efficient provision of government services to the American people. NFFE-IAM strongly opposes H.R. 270.