

NFFE News



NFFE Stands Strong for COVID-19 Safety at House Hearing; Minority Still Not Getting it

June 25, 2020

The Subcommittee on Government Operations in the U.S. House of Representatives held a hearing today to review how the government is responding to keep federal employees safe during the coronavirus pandemic. Chairman Gerald Connolly (D-VA) presided over the hearing and submitted into the official record [a joint statement authored by NFFE that was signed by 13 Federal Workers Alliance \(FWA\) federal employee unions.](#)



Rep. Gerald Connolly (D-VA) is the Chairman of the Subcommittee on Government Operations, which held a hearing Thursday to review federal employees' protections during the coronavirus pandemic.

The statement requested that the Congress work hard to pass the stalled coronavirus relief package, also known as the CARES 2 Act, so that federal employees can get the assistance they need to continue to work effectively and efficiently. NFFE's statement coincided with the goals of the hearing, namely to improve the availability of personal protective equipment (PPE), ordering annual and sick leave restoration that was lost because of the pandemic, review the use of safety leave, expand telework, require management to collaborate with unions, and adhere to the workstation safety guidelines outlined in NFFE's June 1, 2020 letter to President Trump.

Ranking Member Jody Hice (R-GA) asked a witness from the General Services Administration if the union members working from home are still performing union duties while teleworking (referring to Official Time status), apparently still unaware that the performance of union work on federal time has always been illegal. Representative Ralph Norman (R-SC) read part of the NFFE-FWA statement during the virtual hearing and seemed confused, claiming wrongly that the letter was a list of demands before workers return to work. It seems he did not realize federal employees have not stopped working during the pandemic.

Norman asked hearing witness and former senator Jim DeMint (R-SC) if such safety demands were warranted, with DeMint replying that the demands in the NFFE-FWA statement were too stringent because employees and especially younger workers don't need to worry about the virus. This was a naive but expected response from the former senator and disgraced Heritage Foundation president who spent his time in Congress reducing the National Stockpile, leaving Americans unprepared to fight the spread of the COVID-19 virus that has infected at least 2.4 million Americans and killed 124,000.

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