



# NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES

Affiliated with the International Association of Machinists & Aerospace Workers, AFL-CIO

March 21, 2023

Hon. Ken Calvert  
Chair, Defense Subcom.  
House Appropriations Committee  
H-405 The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Hon. Jon Tester  
Chair, Defense Subcom.  
Senate Appropriations Committee  
122 Dirksen Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Hon. Betty McCollum  
Ranking Member, Defense Subcom.  
House Appropriations Committee  
H-405 The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Hon. Susan Collins  
Ranking Member, Defense Subcom.  
Senate Appropriations Committee  
122 Dirksen Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairs and Ranking Members of the Subcommittee:

On behalf of the approximately 110,000 federal employees represented by the National Federation of Federal Employees (NFFE-IAM), including approximately 50,000 workers within the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD), I am writing to express our union's strong concerns regarding proposals to downsize the civilian workforce employed by the DoD.

Earlier this month, Charmain Calvert advocated in an interview with *Defense News* that in order to reduce the DoD civilian workforce and cut defense spending, the DoD should purposefully avoid backfilling civilian job openings left vacant due to regular turnover.

NFFE shares the understanding with the subcommittees that a strong military is an essential component of maintaining the prosperity and freedom of American citizens, however, this proposal runs counter to that stance and will only serve to weaken the capability of the DoD. Proposing to reduce the essential personnel that maintain and directly support our military is incompatible with the goal of maintaining a strong military and a global defense.

For decades, federal employees, including those within the DoD civilian workforce, have been forced to do more with less, leaving little room for waste. Overall, the size of the civilian federal workforce has changed little since the major downsizing after WWII. The number of DoD civilian employees is smaller than it was in 1947 after the downsizing in 1946. Yet, the country is more than twice as populated than it was in the 1940s and U.S. global engagements today last much longer than those of the past, and these engagements are more plentiful in number and geographic location.

The bottom line is that there are few if any additional cuts to make within the civilian DoD workforce without unnecessarily jeopardizing our warfighters and the success of U.S. engagements around the world. There are no more cuts to be made from within the civilian workforce without losing critical institutional

knowledge and impeding proper oversight of the hundreds of billions of taxpayer dollars that run through defense contractors each year.

It is disheartening to see threats to the DoD civilian workforce without regard to the complexities of supporting the most dynamic and effective military in the world. It is easy, if not lazy, to make broad proposals and declarations regarding the size and definition of the federal civilian workforce. However, it is much harder to implement these same broad proposals and declarations because when reality meets these kinds of ill-conceived political soundbites, the intimate relation between proper civilian staffing and maintaining a solid national defense becomes intertwined.

At a time when America's adversaries are watching our every move, it is important to send a universal message that the U.S. is ready to respond to any threat, foreign or domestic, and we can answer the call to preserve its interests and those of its allies in any part of the world within any environment. Blanket suggestions that the country plans to slowly erase its critical defense workforce does not send a message of strength. It sends a message of weakness and internal waffling over what part of our nation's defense we think is worth supporting.

I respectfully urge the members of the Subcommittee from the Majority and Minority to approach these topics with more realistic and prudent expectations on how to safeguard U.S. interests overseas and at home. There are no second chances when it comes to preserving American interest and protecting overseas assets. The civilian DoD workforce is and always has been a major part of this nation's success as a global leader. It is your responsibility to continue this legacy.

Respectfully,

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

Randy Erwin  
National President  
National Federation of Federal Employees, IAMAW, AFL-CIO