

FEDERAL WORKERS ALLIANCE

COLLECTIVELY REPRESENTING OVER 550,000 FEDERAL AND POSTAL WORKERS

March 22, 2024

The Honorable Kiran Arjandas Ahuja
Director
U.S. Office of Personnel Management
1900 E Street, NW
Washington, DC 20415

Dear Director Ahuja,

The Federal Worker Alliance (FWA), a coalition of labor unions representing federal workers, is urgently calling on you to exercise existing statutory authority to raise the maximum annual uniform allowance provided to federal employees mandated to wear agency-directed uniforms.

The current maximum annual allowance of \$800 falls significantly short of covering the costs of uniforms required for the performance of official civil servant duties. Despite possessing the authority under 5 U.S.C. 5902 to adjust this allowance, OPM has allowed it to stagnate at \$800 for eighteen years, despite a significant decrease in its purchasing power over time.

Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) data reveals that the purchasing power of the current \$800 allowance has dwindled by over 50% since OPM's last proposed increase in 2006. BLS Consumer Price Index data indicates that an annual allowance of \$1,232.05 is required to restore the purchasing power of the current \$800 allowance.

Additionally, the initial maximum uniform allowance provided to newly hired federal civil servants, set by OPM, has remained unchanged for almost eighteen years. Increasing this initial allowance to \$2,464.13, as per Consumer Price Index data, is imperative to restore its purchasing power.

The FWA urges OPM to establish a new section to 5 CFR 591, mandating a biennial increase of maximum annual uniform allowance consistent with inflation. These adjustments should, at a minimum, align with the annual Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners.

The decades-long stagnation in uniform allowance increases has inflicted significant financial burdens on civil servants, exacerbated poor employee morale, and contributed to retention issues within several occupations. We implore OPM to address this matter as urgently and expeditiously as possible.

The FWA requests immediate action and eagerly anticipates collaborating with OPM to resolve this significant civil service concern. On behalf of federal first responders and others who wear a uniform, and thereby endure a unique financial burden, we thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. If you have any questions, contact FWA legislative co-chairs Faraz Kahn at fkhan@ifpte.org or Steve Lenkart at slenkart@nffe.org.

Sincerely,

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)
Antilles Consolidated Education Association (ACEA)
International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF)
International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAMAW)
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW)
International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE)
International Organization of Masters, Mates and Pilots (MM&P)
International Plate Printers, Die Stampers, Plate Makers and Engravers of North America (PPDSPM&E of N.A)
Metal Trades Department, AFL-CIO (MTD)
National Association of Agriculture Employees (NAAE)
National Association of Government Employees, SEIU (NAGE)
National Federation of Federal Employees (NFFE)
National Weather Service Employees Organization (NWSEO)
Overseas Federation of Teachers, AFT, AFL-CIO
Printing Packaging Production Workers Union of North America (PPPWU)
Professional Aviation Safety Specialists, AFL-CIO (PASS)
Patent Office Professional Association (POPA)
Seafarers International Union/NMU (SIU)
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
SPORT Air Traffic Controllers Organization (SATCO)
United Power Trades Organization (UPTO)