

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 8, 2019

The Honorable Nita M. Lowey
Chairwoman
House Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
H-323 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Lowey and Ranking Member Granger,

We all understand the critical role that contractors and their dedicated employees play in delivering vital government services. The most recent assessment of the federal workforce (2015) estimated that the federal government employs 9.1 million government employees, active duty military personnel, postal service workers, and contract and grant employees.¹ More than 40 percent of the workforce – about 3.7 million employees – are contract workers. The author of this study pointed out that many of the contract employees support our critical national defense with 2.5 million contract employees supporting almost three-quarters of a million federal civil service employees.

The following examples from our districts highlight how this issue is adversely impacting our nation's aerospace industry. For instance, provide important examples where contract employees provide vital support to our nation:

- At the Kennedy Space Center (KSC), contract employees provide critical support to the development of space exploration and the burgeoning commercial space sector. The last estimate of KSC employees was just over 13,000 with over 11,000 of those employees coming from the ranks of contractors. KSC's continued operations are critical for our national security, NASA, and commercial space operations, as well as the area's environment and regional economy.
- At the Johnson Space Center (JSC), civil service (3050) and contract employees (just over 10,000) lead and conduct flight operations for our astronauts currently aboard the International Space Station (ISS) which has been permanently crewed since November 2000, just over 18 years. This combined JSC team of civil service employees and contractors ensure the safety of our astronauts; serve as the program management and integration interface with our ISS International Partners; are leading the development and operations of our crewed deep space exploration system, the Orion spacecraft; and serve in other critical roles in support of our nation's space program.

KSC and JSC and all of our NASA centers are so much more than just assets – they are our nation's gateway to space. U.S. leadership in space is extremely valuable, and the expected return of a NASA-led and run human spaceflight program is crucial to America's national

security. Space is the ultimate military high ground, and thus it is imperative that we maintain uninterrupted, and with the utmost care, our space related installations and systems. As we have marveled over the last two years at the triumphs of our government and private sector partnership to expand space exploration and commerce, we clearly understand that our progress depends on these contract employees. They are essential to the success of our nation's space endeavors and a symbol of our partnership with the private sector.

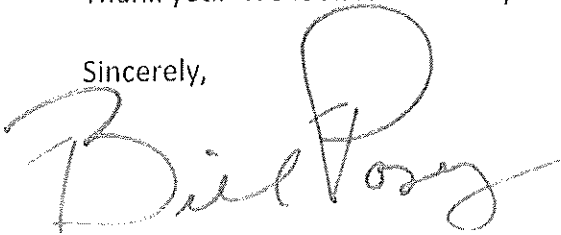
This problem is certainly not limited only to the aerospace community. We share the deep concerns and empathy for our government workforce suffering from the unfortunate impacts of the current partial shutdown of our government. We intend to fully support the restoration of back-pay and benefits to idled government employees when the federal government is reopened.

At the same time, we are deeply disappointed – as we have been during prior government shutdowns – that the Federal Government might fail to act with equity to address the plight of contract employees who suffer interruption of their pay and benefits. We believe it is important to provide equity and parity between government and contract employees in mitigating the impacts of a shutdown. Contract workers face the same hardships – keeping up rent and mortgage payments, buying food and healthcare – as government employees. Their suffering is on par with the suffering of civil service employees. We depend on both civil service employees and contract employees to run our government and deliver its services. We find no basis for treating contract employees differently than civil service employees during government shutdowns.

Therefore, we urge you to work to provide for equitable treatment of contract employees in the FY2019 appropriations bills that will reopen the government. We must include symmetric and equal treatment for contract employees in the restoration of back-pay and benefits. This is the right thing to do and also helps assure that we can attract and sustain a federal work force – both civil service employees and contractors – that will meet the challenges we face as a nation and deliver the vital services Americans need.

Thank you. We look forward to your support.

Sincerely,



Bill Posey
Member of Congress



Brian Babin
Member of Congress