

July 6, 2015

The Honorable John McCain, Chairman
Senate Armed Services Committee
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed, Ranking Member
Senate Armed Services Committee
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mac Thornberry, Chairman
House Armed Services Committee
2126 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Adam Smith, Ranking Member
House Armed Services Committee
2126 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman McCain, Ranking Member Reed, Chairman Thornberry, and Ranking Member Smith,

On behalf of the managers and supervisors currently serving our nation in the federal government and whose interests are represented by the Federal Managers Association (FMA), I urge that the FY 2016 NDAA Conference Report adopt Section 602 of the House-passed version, which repeals recent cuts to temporary duty assignment (TDY) per diem allowances as enacted by the Department of Defense (DOD). As you know, in order to combat restrictive budgets, department leaders instituted drastic cuts to long-term TDY on November 1, 2014. Civilian defense employees on TDY between 30 and 180 days saw a reduction by 25 percent, while those over 180 days face a 45 percent reduction.

These extreme cuts put undue financial burdens on these dedicated employees who struggle to meet these per diem requirements or are forced to make up any cost differences out of their own pockets due to the fact that these new rates will price them out of markets. Hotel industry representatives commented they currently face 80 percent capacity; they do not need the business of the federal government. Additionally, TDY service is voluntary. FMA is already seeing its members reluctant to serve TDY as they already have mortgages, car payments, and child care costs at home. An FMA member based out of Naval Undersea Warfare Center, Division Keyport commented, "It has always been difficult to find people at the senior grade levels required willing to disrupt their family life for these kinds of assignments. The new rule on 55 percent per diem has made it even more difficult to find senior people willing to go." A reduction of travel payments for employees on official travel needs to be fully funded to prevent having to take funds from personal accounts to cover expenses and waiting to be reimbursed at some later time by the government.

Further concerning is DOD's reductions to TDY per diem allowances are not in line with the General Service Administration's Government-Wide Travel Advisory Committee, which sets per diem rates based on data-driven calculations. Per diem rates are set based upon contractor-provided average daily rate data of local lodging properties. All rates are evaluated to ensure that they are fair and equitable. DOD did not utilize this method when establishing new TDY per diem allowance rates.

FMA was pleased to see that the House fiscal year 2016 National Defense Authorization Act included a repeal of these drastic cuts. We applaud the members of the House Armed Service Committee who recognize how detrimental these cuts are to DOD's missions and goals. While this language was not included in the Senate version of the bill, it is my hope that the conference language will preserve the House-passed language to restore TDY per diem allowances. This will encourage DOD civilian employees to volunteer for TDY duty and ensure DOD projects and programs on time and by the most capable employees.

Thank you for your continued support and leadership on this matter. Federal workers are still trying to financially recover from the three year pay freeze; furloughs caused by sequestration; and, a government shutdown. Civilian defense employees are dedicated men and women and should not shoulder the burden of departmental cost cutting. Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact FMA's Government Affairs Director Greg Stanford at gstanford@fedmanagers.org or (703) 683-8700.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Patricia J. Niehaus". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Patricia J. Niehaus
National President

Cc: Members of the Senate and House Armed Services Committees