

November 12, 2015

The Honorable Hal Rogers  
2406 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Rogers,

As you work to craft the final Fiscal Year 2016 (FY 2016) appropriations bill, the undersigned unions, management organizations, and industry trade associations are writing to ask for your support of military and civilian employees by prohibiting cuts to the nationally established per diem rates within the Department of Defense (DOD) for lodging and incidental expenses during long-term travel. Specifically, we ask that you do so through a defund provision in the FY16 Omnibus appropriations measure.

In November 2014, DOD made changes to the Joint Travel Regulations (JTR) that included a 25% cut to both the per diem allowance and the lodging stipend for travel in excess of 30 days, and a 45% cut for travel longer than 180 days. These cuts unfairly burden DOD military and civilian employees and frustrate the ability of the hotel industry to offer a government rate for DOD travel. If savings are to be achieved through the travel budget they should not come at the expense of the people who regularly travel for extended periods of time. The potential savings are relatively minimal in light of our overall budget challenges, and would come at the expense of the people doing complex and challenging work that is necessary to ensure that the men and women of the United States armed forces have everything they need to keep our nation safe.

Many of our organizations have polled our members and the feedback has been overwhelming in opposition to these cuts. The dominant themes in the feedback we received included the inability to identify reduced rate lodging at many of the long-term travel locations, requiring employees to stay at substandard housing or complete an unwieldy approval process when reduced rate lodging is not available. Another major concern is that the cuts to the per diem allowance will inevitably lead to employees who travel for long periods of time having to personally pay for expenses directly related to official travel; ultimately serving as a disincentive for employees to travel for long periods of time. Currently, many of those who travel for long-term duty assignments do so regularly, and have a wealth of knowledge and experience, which is important to the military mission.

The current cuts to long-term TDY travel penalizes the military and civilian employees who have already been asked to spend a significant amount of time away from their homes and families. Many of these employees have school aged children and family obligations for which they are still responsible while on official travel. DOD military and civilian employees should not have to worry if they have enough money for both their personal responsibilities at home as well as money to cover basic necessities such as food, laundry and transportation to and from their duty assignments while on official travel.

Representatives Derek Kilmer and Walter B. Jones introduced bipartisan legislation prohibiting reduced per diem allowances for long-term travel within DOD. The House FY 2016 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) also included language that prohibited DOD from reducing employees' per diem allowance based on the duration of the TDY travel assignment. The Senate FY 2016 NDAA calls for a study and report on the impact of the reduced per diem rates within specific DoD agencies, and the extent to which the new policy discourages DoD employees from volunteering for important temporary

duty assignments. Such a study would have been beneficial prior to DOD actually implementing reduced per diem rates, however, DOD employees who currently travel for long periods of time are already being unfairly burdened by cuts to the nationally established per diem rates.

We have been told that one of the justifications for the reduction is the belief that the current policy does not include any incentive for the traveler to save government funds. While we take issue with the underlying premise, the outcome of the Department's proposal is to force trivial savings in the travel budget by taking money from the personal pockets of federal workers who volunteer to travel for extended periods of time, rather than addressing the incentive issue directly. We believe that this is a misguided solution to solve a perceived problem. Furthermore, if the DoD had addressed this matter pre-decisionally with key stakeholder groups like labor, as is called for in Executive Order 13522, then there is a strong likelihood that more reasonable, and mutually agreed upon efficiencies in the travel budget could have been achieved.

We ask that you block any further implementation of this wrongheaded proposal by defunding the implementation of the TDY long-term lodging and per diem cuts for travel over 30 and 180 days, and the elimination of reimbursable incidental expenses.

Should you or your staff have any questions regarding this request please contact Alethea Predeoux at [alethea.predeoux@afge.org](mailto:alethea.predeoux@afge.org) or at (202) 639-6953.

Thank you.

**American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO  
International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers  
American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations  
National Federation of Federal Employees  
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers  
Metal Trades Department  
Federal Managers Association  
American Hotel and Lodging Association  
U.S. Travel Association  
International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers  
National Association of Government Employees**

Cc: Members of the House Appropriations Committee