

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 14, 2017

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Ryan and Leader Pelosi:

We write to express our strong opposition to President Trump's assault on the salaries and pensions of middle class federal employees, retirees, and their families to pay for tax cuts for billionaires, as proposed in his Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 budget request. We urge you to reject these destructive proposals and block any similar measures from being considered on the House floor.

We strongly oppose the four policy changes President Trump has proposed, which would take away \$149 billion from middle class federal employees and retirees in total. Specifically, the President has proposed increasing the amount federal employees pay toward their retirement fund, which is tantamount to a pay cut. He also calls for reducing by half a percent the COLA for Civil Service Retirement System beneficiaries, and completely eliminating COLAs for current and future federal retirees in the Federal Employee Retirement System (FERS). It should be noted that by law, FERS COLAs are already required to be reduced below what is provided under Social Security.

Additionally, the proposal calls for basing future retirement benefits on the average of the highest five years of salary instead of the current three, further reducing benefits for hardworking middle class families. Finally, it calls for eliminating the supplement for employees who retire before they can start collecting Social Security at age 62. These enhanced benefits largely support our federal law enforcement officers, firefighters, and air traffic controllers who are forced to retire early due to the physically demanding nature of the job.

Worse, the President's proposal would affect all current retirees and employees, rather than making changes on a prospective basis. This breaks a promise to current federal employees and retirees. We should not alter policies that families have planned their lives around, particularly when it affects current retirees with limited ability to make up for unforeseen reductions in expected income.

Federal employees have already paid dearly for the cause of deficit reduction. They were subject to a three-year pay freeze from 2011 through 2013, which the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates will save \$98 billion over ten years. From 2014 through 2016, federal employees received pay raises lower than what is required by law, yielding \$62 billion in savings for deficit reduction, per CBO. Congress has twice increased required employee contributions to the federal retirement programs, essentially cutting workers' take home pay, for another estimated \$21 billion in savings. And in 2013, over 750,000 federal employees were furloughed due to sequestration cuts, which is estimated to have cost federal employees over \$1 billion in lost wages in 2013 alone. In total, these shared sacrifices by federal workers have helped reduce the deficit by no less than \$182 billion since 2010.

Adding insult to injury, due to the government shutdown in 2013, over 800,000 federal employees were indefinitely furloughed and another 1.3 million were forced to report to work without known payment dates, through no fault of their own. An irresponsible Congress foisted this terrible frustration and uncertainty on our federal workforce and their families because of partisan brinksmanship.

No other group of Americans have been asked to sacrifice more for the sake of deficit reduction. We cannot balance the budget on the backs of the federal workforce, and we should not try. Our federal employees have made major contributions to this effort and should not continue to be singled out for harsh financial sacrifice.

Further, enacting these proposals would harm the nation as a whole. Every day, federal workers serve the American people by protecting us from foreign and domestic threats, disease, and dangerous work conditions. They connect the public to the old age and disability benefits they are eligible for, and care of our wounded warriors. They make sure that people receive fair and impartial justice, facilitate safe air travel, and help keep our air and water clean. Across the nation, federal employees perform a vital service to the American people every day.

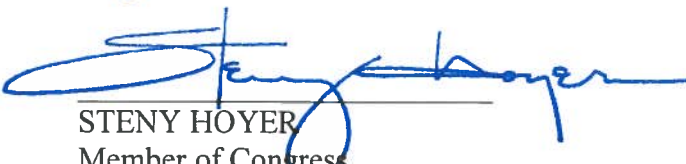
These are highly skilled and dedicated public servants. Taking their pensions away and gutting their pay would have the effect of pushing those skilled people out of the civil service and impairing the recruitment of new talent.

After dedicating their careers to public service, federal employees and retirees deserve much better from us. Therefore, we will oppose any effort to balance the budget on the backs of public servants, and we urge you to stop legislation from being brought to the House floor that would undermine and demoralize our federal workforce.

Sincerely,


JAMIE RASKIN
Member of Congress


GERALD E. CONNOLLY
Member of Congress


STENY HOYER
Member of Congress

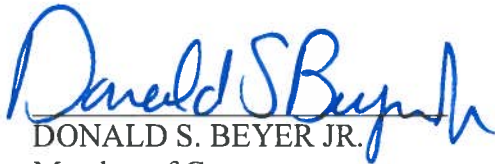

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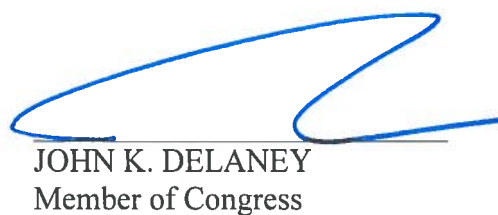

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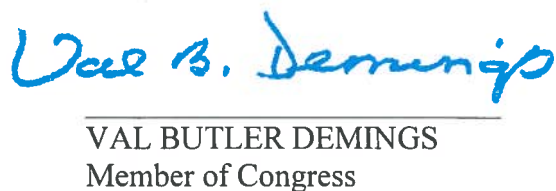

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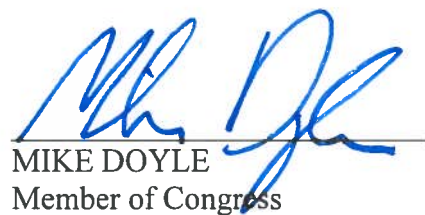

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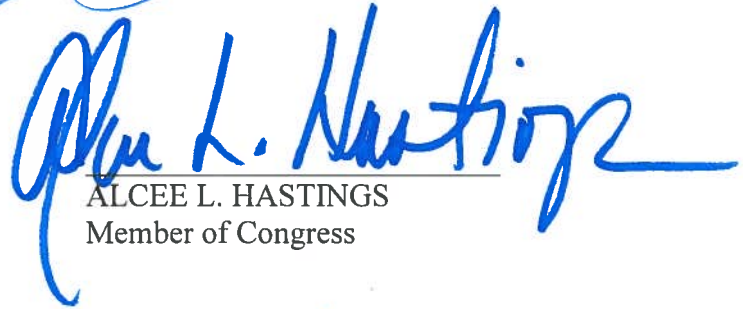
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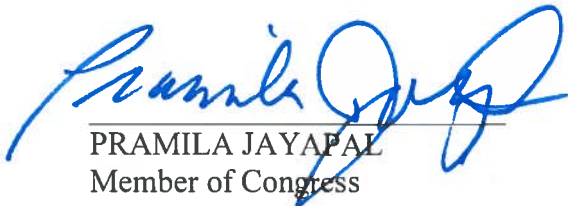
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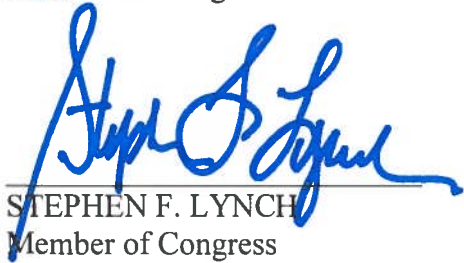
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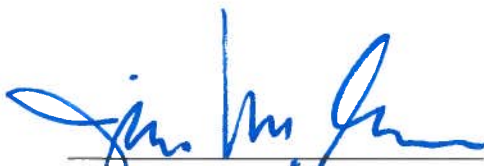
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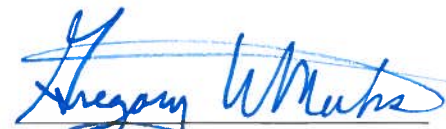
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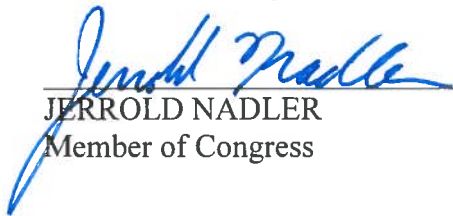
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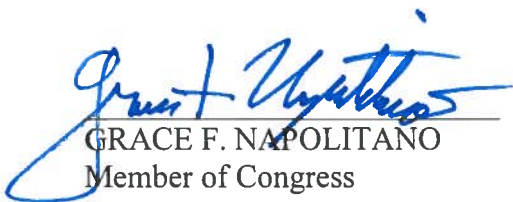
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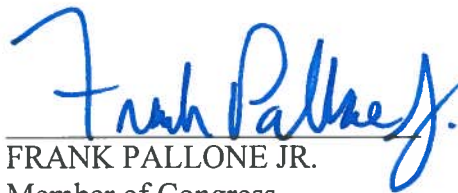
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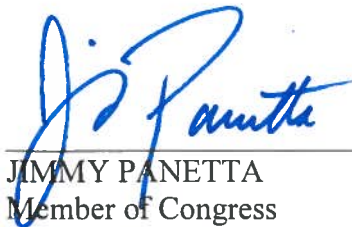
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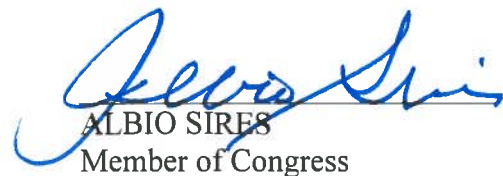
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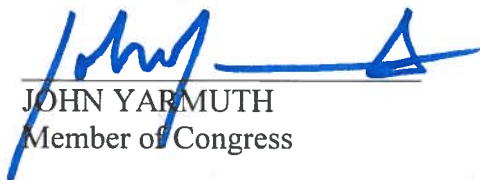

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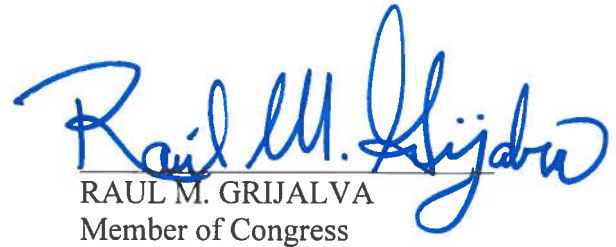

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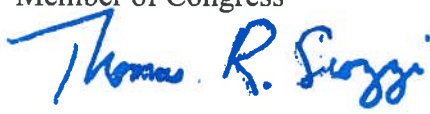

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