

INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF TEAMSTERS

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July 18, 2017

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
H-305 Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Frelinghuysen and Ranking Member Lowey:

On behalf of the 1.4 million members of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, I am writing to express our strong opposition to the draft Fiscal Year 2018 Appropriations Bill for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies that the Committee will consider this week.

The draft bill is a \$5 billion reduction below the FY 2017 funding level and fails to make the millions of working Americans and their families who rely on the protections and services supported by this bill a priority.

The bill before you threatens the safety and welfare of working men and women, and “short changes” the future of our children. The bill would undermine important worker rights by providing totally inadequate funds for the principal programs that protect the safety and health of America’s workers; guarantee the right of employees to organize and bargain collectively; enforce our nation’s wage and hour, and child labor laws; and protect retirement security and equal opportunity rights. Particularly troubling are the \$25 million cut in funding and the restrictions placed on the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). These actions will severely impede the Board’s ability to fulfill its mission and to provide anything remotely resembling timely recourse to workers and will strip millions of workers of existing protections that safeguard their right to organize and bargain collectively.

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The levels of resources provided for the Wage and Hour Division is inadequate to the task of ensuring workers receive the compensation they are entitled to by law and have earned.

Slashing funds for the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, the agency charged with ensuring workers return home safely at the end of their day, makes the claims of strong support for a safe healthy workplace ring hollow. The \$14 million reduction for federal enforcement and the elimination of the Harwood training grants are particularly disconcerting as is the \$10 million cut in the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, the primary agency conducting research to better understand and improve workplace health safety.

The bill fails to provide adequate resources for job training, and the elimination of funding for federal apprenticeship programs will make it more difficult for states and local communities to provide needed skills training. Workers need assistance and training to enable them to find new employment and to support themselves and their families. And, businesses need well trained workers to meet their needs and grow.

The bill also fails to provide adequate resources to improve our children's schools. Further, the cut in Pell Grant student aid funds will undermine the financial stability of a program important to the ability of many young people to attend college.

Finally, we wish to express our strong objections to the NLRB and DOL policy riders that limit their authority to carry out their mission to protect worker rights and consumer interests. Among these riders are:

Joint Employer – The Teamsters Union vigorously opposes any rider to prevent the NLRB from applying its current standard for determining whether two or more employers are joint employers under the National Labor Relations Act.

Tribal Sovereignty – We vigorously oppose any rider that would deny protection under the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) to a large number of workers who are employed by tribally owned and operated enterprises located on Indian land. Tribal casino enterprises alone employ over 600,000 workers, the vast majority of whom are not Native Americans. Such rider would strip all workers in the many Tribal commercial enterprises of their rights and protections under the NLRA.

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DOL Fiduciary Rule – We strongly oppose any rider that would block DOL from going forward with its fiduciary rule to help ensure working people saving for retirement are receiving investment advice that aligns with their best interest.

We also understand that amendments may be offered to add riders to undermine or overturn the NLRB Election Rule and the NLRB Bargaining Unit Standard. If such amendments are offered, we strongly urge you to oppose them.

The working men and women of this nation deserve to be treated with respect and dignity. They deserve a safe workplace. They deserve avenues of timely recourse against abusive employment practices. They deserve the opportunity to provide for their families, to be paid a decent wage, to receive the wages they have earned, and to know their retirement is secure. Their children deserve schools that are safe, secure, and conducive to learning and the opportunity to pursue their dreams.

The draft bill before you fails on these counts. It cannot be sufficiently improved through amendment. We urge you to reject this legislation.

Sincerely,



James P. Hoffa
General President

Cc: Members of the Committee