



# AMERICAN FEDERATION OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES, AFL-CIO

**J. David Cox, Sr.**  
National President

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National Vice President for  
Women and Fair Practices

April 30, 2013

The Honorable Chuck Hagel  
Secretary of Defense  
1400 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Hagel:

I was surprised and disappointed by your April 26 response to a bipartisan group of 126 House lawmakers who recently urged you not to arbitrarily impose furloughs on civilian employees. In your letter, you responded:

"While I appreciate your request to allow Services the maximum flexibility to determine civilian furlough numbers, DoD's most important responsibility is national security. In reallocating resources throughout the Department to the highest national security priorities, we will strive for consistency and fairness across the Department."

In other words, you continue to insist that all components and agencies will have to impose the same number of furlough days, even if some components and agencies have devised methods of compiling the savings required by sequestration which don't require furloughs. Such an arbitrary approach neither promotes national security nor fairness.

It is universally acknowledged that furloughs will increase costs, reduce productivity, and undermine readiness in the Department of Defense (DoD). Significantly, some parts of the Department don't need to impose furloughs because they have come up with offsetting sequestration cuts or because they generate their own revenues, e.g., working capital fund entities. The Navy has been outspoken in saying that it doesn't need to use furloughs and that furloughs will cost more in the long run. We've heard similar sentiments behind-the-scenes from the Air Force and the Defense Finance and Accounting Service.

Nevertheless, the Department is insisting that if some components or agencies need to impose furloughs, then all components and furloughs must impose furloughs--including the same number of days--out of a perverse definition of "fairness". This makes no sense from efficiency and equity standpoints. Why impose furloughs when they're not necessary in some if not many circumstances? Why needlessly increase costs? Why gratuitously reduce productivity? Why unnecessarily undermine readiness? Why dramatically reduce the income of all civilian personnel and threaten the livelihoods of their families? Moreover, this punishes the intelligent managers who planned ahead for sequestration and were willing to reduce spending on FY13 service contract dollars, and therefore don't need to impose furloughs, and renders unaccountable those managers who didn't plan and who shirked from cutting contracts.



Components and agencies should clearly not be forced to take the same number of furlough days. If components or agencies have come up with offsetting sequestration cuts or generate their own revenues, they should not be required to impose furloughs. That's not a radical proposition. Rather, that's competent leadership. Other cabinet colleagues with similarly weighty responsibilities have reconsidered premature decisions to impose furloughs, including Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Janet Napolitano and Department of Justice (DoJ) Attorney General Eric Holder. There is no budgetary or statutory reason why you can't show similar leadership. And there's no way anyone could contend that the work performed by DHS and DoJ employees is more important than the work performed by your reliable and experienced civilian workforce.

It is well-known that the component most dependent on furloughs is the Army. However, it is now also common knowledge that in FY12 the Army spent on service contracts \$2.5 billion more than it was allowed under law, a sum that could have been used to offset the need for furloughs not just in the Army but in much of the rest of the Department.

I am not certain that it is sufficiently appreciated in the Pentagon the adverse impact furloughs will have on the civilian workforce, many of whom live from paycheck to paycheck. As you know, DoD's civilian workforce is not just the largest workforce in the entire federal workforce, but also the one that includes the largest number of the lowest paid federal employees. You owe it to them not to rigidly adhere to arbitrary, across-the-board cuts. Thank you for your consideration of my concern.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. David Cox, Sr.", written in a cursive style.

J. David Cox, Sr.  
National President