

Barack Obama

September 9, 2008

John Gage
National President
American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO
80 F Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear President Gage,

I am writing to respond to your concerns raised with my staff about the draft May 22nd regulations issued by the Department of Defense to implement the National Security Personnel System (NSPS). As I understand it, DoD has stated that it will implement final regulations on this matter in October. I agree with you that it is inappropriate and unwise for DoD to implement such a highly contentious, ill-conceived program so late in this administration, particularly following the vast revisions to the program included in the FY08 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). It is clear to me that the intention of Congress was to reinstate collective bargaining. Yet DoD is still moving forward with a personnel system that prohibits most collective bargaining.

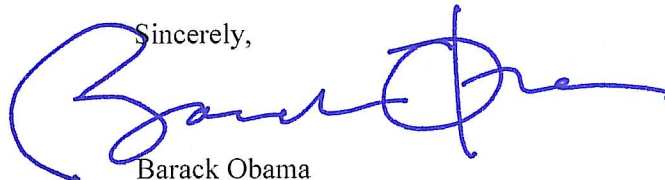
Based on my conversations with DoD civilian employees, I have several concerns about the NSPS pay system, including the aforementioned restrictions on bargaining rights, the disconnection between pay and performance despite what employees have been told, the requirement that performance ratings be pushed into a forced distribution, or bell curve, the suppression of wages by permitting bonuses to be paid instead of base salary increases, and the virtual elimination of merit consideration in the promotion process.

Further, the class action lawsuits alleging race, gender, and age bias by employees placed under pay systems similar to NSPS in other agencies should give us pause. I cannot and will not support a pay system which discriminates against employees, and I cannot and will not support a pay system which ultimately is designed to suppress wages for civilian DoD employees over time.

The elimination of collective bargaining rights is not the purpose Congress had this year when it enacted legislation in support of the hundreds of thousands of civilian employees who support the mission and operations of the Department of Defense. I am fully aware that DoD's civilian employees are the Department's backbone, without which our troops would never be able to conduct operations in an effective manner. Never before has that support function been so important to all Americans, as we fight two wars simultaneously in Iraq and Afghanistan. I want to assure you that if I am elected President, I will substantially revise these NSPS regulations, and strongly consider a complete repeal.

Thank you, John, for all you and AFGE's members do for America.

Sincerely,



Barack Obama



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