

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

October 16, 2025

The Honorable Pete Hegseth  
1400 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20301-1400

Dear Secretary Hegseth:

We write to express our concern regarding the Department of Defense's delayed implementation of 2025 pay raises for federal employees under the Federal Wage System (FWS). We strongly urge you to exercise your authority to immediately reconstitute the Department of Defense Wage Committee so blue collar workers can receive their 2025 pay adjustments.

The FWS is a uniform pay-setting system that covers federal appropriated fund and nonappropriated fund blue collar employees who are paid by the hour. The system's goal is to ensure that federal trade, craft and laboring employees within a local wage area who perform the same duties receive the same rate of pay. Under this system, raises for blue collar federal workers are based on various data sources, including a series of wage surveys conducted by the Department of Defense Wage Committee. The committee then votes to implement wage adjustments, region by region, over the course of the year.

The work of the Department of Defense Wage Committee, which affects roughly 60,000 workers nationwide who serve in the Department of Defense, has been frozen following departmental decisions related to advisory committees. A March 2025 memo halted the department's advisory committees' operations for a 45-day review to "ensure that the department's advisory committee efforts align with our most pressing strategic priorities."<sup>1</sup> A subsequent April 2025 memo fired all existing committee members and directed the department to begin a search process to reconstitute the advisory committees.<sup>2</sup> Though the Department of Defense Wage Committee is housed within the Department of Defense, these decisions also impact FWS workers across the federal government – ranging from the Department of Veterans Affairs to the National Park Service.

If this situation is not fixed soon, agencies across the federal government could see an exodus of workers with highly specialized skillsets. The loss of skilled blue collar federal workers would be particularly damaging to the Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard and Intermediate Maintenance Facility in Hawai'i. The shipyard employs approximately 2,000 wage grade workers who are directly affected by the ongoing delays and are essential to maintaining naval vessels.

Over the past four years, we have worked with the Department of Defense and across party lines to address the critical labor shortage in our nation's shipyards. We have supported the American workforce through investments in training programs, partnerships with educational institutions to develop ship-related career pathways and funding to hire skilled workers. These investments benefit our constituents, strengthen our economy and are essential to national security. However,

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these investments are at risk if these essential workers lose faith in the federal government's ability to support them as they help keep our naval vessels ready and able to protect our nation.

To help ensure the federal government is properly supporting federal blue collar workers, we request a response to the questions below no later than November 17, 2025:

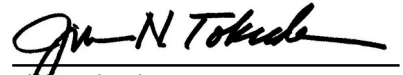
1. How does the Department of Defense plan to quickly reconstitute the Department of Defense Wage Committee?
2. When will the Department of Defense Wage Committee resume its critical work of setting FWS wages?
3. What actions can be taken to provide retroactive compensation to employees whose pay increases were delayed?

We look forward to your prompt response to this letter and your engagement on this issue. We stand ready to provide any assistance that may be needed.

With aloha,



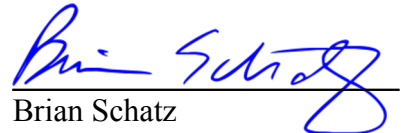
Ed Case  
Member of Congress



JM Tokuda  
Member of Congress



Mazie K. Hirono  
United States Senator



Brian Schatz  
United States Senator