

August 29, 2008

The Honorable Steny H. Hoyer  
Majority Leader  
H107 Capitol  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Hoyer:

At your request, the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has completed a comprehensive review of your proposal to eliminate the traditional 5-day workweek and replace it with a 4-day/10-hours-a-day workweek. We have concluded that such a proposal would be detrimental to the Federal Government's ability to provide essential services, would weaken national security safeguards, and impact current recruitment and retention efforts within the Federal workforce.

Mandated 4-day/10-hours-a-day workweeks could make it extremely difficult for some Federal agencies to provide the American taxpayer with critical services, such as those provided by the Social Security Administration, the Internal Revenue Service and others. The Nation's defense, homeland security, and intelligence operations, which must function around the clock, would certainly be jeopardized. OPM, as the chief adviser to the President on human capital management issues, would strongly advise against any efforts to compromise national security in the name of energy conservation.

We also are concerned about forcing employees into a work schedule that could negatively effect recruitment and retention. As you know, many Federal employees have responsibilities for caring for young children or aging adults. Others are dependent on mass transit or carpools for transportation to and from their worksite. They could be negatively impacted by a requirement to work the extended hours required by a 10-hour day. At a time when figures show the Government is facing a major loss of workforce skills due to impending baby boomer retirements, OPM is working aggressively with other Federal agencies to recruit and retain workers with critical skills. Forcing employees into a 4-day workweek could undermine those efforts.

#### **Federal Agencies and Employees Are Already Utilizing Workforce Flexibilities**

As you know, current law under chapter 61 of title 5, United States Code, provides agencies the authority to offer flexible and compressed work schedules (i.e., Alternative Work Schedules). In addition, managers may allow employees to work from home or at alternative work site. Recent statistics estimate that over 50 percent of the workforce has a flexible work schedule of one type or another. We strongly believe the current system is effective and is already helping Federal employees reduce fuel consumption. OPM has repeatedly restated our commitment to this ideal as evidenced in the attached recent memo to the agency Chief Human Capital Officers.

Another alternative to the traditional schedule (i.e., fixed, 5-day, 8-hours per day, Monday through Friday) are flexible and compressed work schedules. Both of these alternatives

allow full-time employees to complete their biweekly 80-hour work requirement in less than 10 days, including 4-day workweeks (10 hours per day) for certain full-time employees.

Alternative work schedules are popular in the Federal Government and agencies often publicize their availability as a means of attracting candidates into public service. Many agency job postings now include information on whether a specific position is eligible for telework or any other type of alternative work schedule. Of course, these flexibilities are not an entitlement. They are used when the responsibilities and duties of the position will not be comprised by a non-traditional work week and are effective only after applicable union negotiations on their availability.

Our technical experts at OPM, in close consultation with Federal agencies, regularly review our workforce policies to ensure agencies are able to meet mission goals. The Government employs 1.8 million civilian employees nationally and worldwide and is one of the largest employers in the U.S. Because of its myriad geographical locations and varied occupational series, Federal personnel policies must be written to accommodate this large and diverse population.

#### **Promotion of Workforce Flexibilities is an Ongoing Commitment**

OPM's mission is to ensure the Federal Government has an effective civilian workforce. In completing this mission, we regularly engage in activities that promote workforce flexibilities. Recent activities include:

- OPM has hosted and will continue to host forums for Chief Human Capital Officers and agency Human Resources staff on workforce flexibilities, including telework.
- OPM continually updates information about alternative work schedules on its website.
- OPM has partnered with the USDA Graduate School to develop instructor-led manager training on telework. We also provide online telework training.
- OPM redesigned and unveiled in 2008 a new interactive telework website for managers and employees ([www.telework.gov](http://www.telework.gov)).

We will continue to aggressively encourage agencies and employees to take advantage of the Federal Government's current human capital flexibilities. At the same time, we believe each Federal agency is in the best position to determine the extent to which it uses these flexibilities to achieve the optimum balance between employee flexibility and the agency's ability to effectively carry out its mission.

Sincerely,

Michael W. Hager  
Acting Director

Enclosure