

# AFL-CIO

## LEGISLATIVE ALERT

June 18, 2025

RE: Oppose the HSGAC Budget Reconciliation Proposal

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the 63 affiliates of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), representing 15 million working people across our economy, including federal government employees and the private, state, and local sector workers and their families who depend upon the work of federal government employees, we urge you to oppose the budget reconciliation proposal from Chairman Rand Paul and the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs related to federal workers. These provisions have virtually nothing to do with budgetary issues.

**Instead, the HSGAC proposal is straight-up unionbusting.**

After President Trump committed the single biggest act of unionbusting in American history – signing an executive order to strip a million federal workers of their right to bargain – these provisions are designed to finish the job against the rest of the federal workforce. Each provision is designed to discourage working in the civil service, to discourage joining or forming a union, to strip people of their rights or discourage the enforcement of rights, and to financially hamper the ability of unions to efficiently and effectively represent their members. The purpose of these provisions is clear: to strip federal workers of their rights and their voice. Busting unions and silencing civil servants will mean whistles will not be blown, innovations not raised, efficiencies lost – all to the detriment of the American public.

Here's how the HSGAC's proposed unionbusting works:

- **For new federal employees, if you want to keep any civil service protections as a federal worker or union contract protections as a union member, you must take a 10% total pay cut.** The plan is to charge every federal worker an extra 5% in employee pension contributions and then, for any federal worker who does not opt to become “at will,” charge them yet another 5%. These are the workers who report contaminated food, unsafe working conditions, or waste government that are being put at risk of being targeted and fired without due process. When federal workers can't speak up without fear of losing their jobs, every American suffers.

- **For federal employees, if you want to enforce your employee rights as a civil servant, you must pay a fee of hundreds of dollars for every claim or appeal you file.** With all the unlawful personnel actions the Trump Administration has undertaken, the claims and appeals by wronged employees have been coming fast and furious. A way to discourage these filings without discouraging the lawbreaking is to charge the victims a fee for filing their claim. Under this plan, either the Administration can run roughshod over workers' rights without any legal resistance, or it can at least make some money off of its own lawbreaking. Incidentally, the agency that would hear these claims and enforce the law is currently unable to act because Trump fired one of its members, destroying its quorum.
- **For federal employees, if you want to join a union, you must pay a 10% tax on your union dues.** It's sometimes said: if you want to discourage something, you tax it, and the HSGAC provisions tax union dues. Specifically, the plan is to charge federal workers a 10% administrative fee for payroll dues deduction. Private sector employers do not engage in this needless fee-charging for union members, with payroll dues deduction systems being the standard across every industry, but now the federal government would, precisely to discourage workers from joining unions.
- **For federal workers' unions, you can either go bankrupt or give up effectively representing your members.** The HSGAC provisions charge unions for "official time" – the time spent undertaking their basic labor-management responsibilities when it is most efficient for everyone. Official time costs the federal government relatively little and benefits the taxpayer by making sure labor-management issues are resolved in the most efficient and effective manner. For unions with limited resources, these amounts could quickly bankrupt them. The alternative is to not conduct labor-management relations and representational work when and where it is most efficient and effective for all involved. In either case, the point of this provision is to undermine the union's ability to represent its members.
- **The HSGAC provisions dole out bonuses to bosses who fire essential workers and gut essential services.** That means bosses get a payout for laying off the workers who inspect our food, process our Medicare claims, and make sure emergency aid gets to our communities after a hurricane.
- **The HSGAC provisions add red tape to health care plans that make it easier for federal workers to lose coverage and harder to enroll.** That means new hurdles for families trying to adopt a child, care for aging parents, or navigate a new cancer diagnosis.

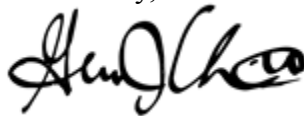
- **The HSGAC provisions give the President the authority to potentially eliminate entire agencies and programs and essential services enacted by Congress, under the guise of “reorganization.”** The plan doesn’t require any review of how the President’s changes would impact working families. We’ve seen this sort of “reorganization” already unlawfully underway via the activities of the DOGE and Trump appointees implementing Project 2025 without regard for the law as established by Congress.

While the immediate policy goal is clear – to bust unions and silence workers – the effects of these provisions on taxpayers are far-reaching. At-will employment or charging workers to enforce merit systems principles means undermining public service and the rule of law and returning to the spoils system. Destroying unions means silencing workers who, with the backing of their unions, would otherwise speak up about corruption or inefficiencies that harm taxpayers. All these measures will lead to the deterioration of the federal workforce and the services it provides for the taxpaying public – to make our country run well and safely, from clean air, to weather forecasts, to safe workplaces, to safe food and drugs, to groundbreaking research, to the efficient and effective administration of benefits that taxpayers have worked hard to provide themselves and their fellow citizens.

We urge you to stand up for federal workers, the right to form and join unions, the right to collectively bargain, a civil service instead of a spoils system, and good government – and oppose the HSGAC budget reconciliation proposal.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue.

Sincerely,



Jody Calamine  
Director, Government Affairs