



February 4, 2019

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
The Honorable Charles Schumer  
The Honorable Richard Shelby  
The Honorable Patrick Leahy  
The Honorable Ron Johnson  
The Honorable Gary Peters  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
The Honorable Nita Lowey  
The Honorable Kay Granger  
The Honorable Elijah Cummings  
The Honorable Jim Jordan  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Members of Congress:

We write as faith-based organizations and religious bodies representing Jewish, Christian, Muslim and other faith traditions to urge you to support efforts to secure back pay for employees of federal contractors who were unpaid during the recent government shutdown. All of our faith traditions uphold the critical importance of the dignity of work and the obligation of employers to compensate workers for their efforts. Just as Congress rightly provided back pay for federal employees who were furloughed or unpaid during the shutdown, Congress should also provide back pay for the contract employees who face extreme financial hardship because they went more than a month without their paychecks.

Over the past few decades, the federal government has contracted out more and more of the jobs and functions it used to perform. For every federal worker hired, there are nearly double the number of contract workers hired, reaching about 3.7 million according to 2015 estimates from the Volcker Alliance. These jobs include the women and men who clean federal buildings, staff cafeterias and concession stands, who process payments, and who provide vital tech support to federal agencies.

These federal contract workers help keep our nation running even when their paychecks aren't cut directly by the U.S. government, and they need their paychecks just as badly as federal employees. Many of these workers are struggling right now to pay their bills for necessities like food, medicine and housing. They deserve to be paid.

As Congress negotiates a deal to secure funding for the rest of the fiscal year, we urge you to do everything within your power to provide back pay for the contract workers throughout this country who have suffered just as grave a financial injury as federal employees during this shutdown. Equity and justice demands they too receive compensation for the injuries they suffered.

Sincerely,

National Council of Jewish Women

The Episcopal Church

Interfaith Worker Justice

The United Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society

First Universalist Church of Auburn, Unitarian Universalist

Union for Reform Judaism

Ecumenical Poverty Initiative

National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd

NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice

American Baptist Home Mission Societies

Faith in Public Life

Office of Public Witness

Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, US Provinces

United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries

Alliance of Baptists