

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

February 4, 2025

Acting Director Charles Ezell
Office of Personnel Management
1900 E Street, NW
Washington, DC 20415-1000

Dear Acting Director Ezell:

We write to express our deep concerns about the unintended consequences of the Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) January 22, 2025, implementation guidance regarding a recent Presidential Memorandum on remote and telework arrangements for federal employees. The broad implementation overlooks the economic security and well-being of America's military families, diplomatic spouses, and other national security professionals who are stationed away from home in service of the U.S. government. The impacted personnel are less than one percent of the federal workforce, but their ability to work from their families' duty stations for limited periods of time (typically 2-3 years) is essential to recruitment for hard-to-fill assignments, family unity, and retention of their valuable experience and contributions to national security. We urge you to revise OPM's guidance to explicitly exempt the small number of affected spouses and dependents and avoid attrition issues that could negatively impact American military readiness and national security.

It is commonly said that when one person joins the military, the whole family serves. This maxim is no less true for diplomats, intelligence professionals, federal law enforcement officers, and other national security professionals who are routinely required to relocate to postings across the world. As a result of these relocations, spouses and dependents often struggle to find consistent employment, creating personal and financial strains that have been cited as a major cause of attrition.

To address these issues, the federal government has made substantial efforts to support the employment of spouses of military servicemembers, diplomats, and other national security professionals through initiatives like the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) 4+1 Commitment and the Domestic Employees Teleworking Overseas (DETO) program. The 4+1 Commitment, spearheaded by organizations like Blue Star Families, outlines core employment policies to enhance career opportunities for military spouses, including job transferability, remote work, flexible hours, and paid leave for Permanent Change of Station (PCS) orders. These challenges also affect our nation's diplomats, as recognized by Section 6227 of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), which notes that spousal employment issues often lead to employee departures in critical sectors. Meanwhile, the DETO program has been vital in enabling spouses of military servicemembers, diplomats, and other national security professionals employed in federal roles to continue their work remotely when stationed overseas, maintaining their professional contributions while supporting family unity. These initiatives serve as cornerstones of a broader federal strategy to support families who serve our nation.


DETO agreements also help increase U.S. presence in hard-to-fill diplomatic posts, including in Sub-Saharan Africa, where persistent vacancies have hindered U.S. competitiveness against the People's Republic of China,

which has significantly increased its diplomatic presence across the world. Allowing one spouse to secure a DETO agreement enables the other to take challenging posts without facing family separation.


The Office of Management and Budget’s January 27, 2025, memorandum titled “Agency Return to Office Implementation Plans” states that “Agencies should also exclude military spouses working remotely based on the Military Spouse Employment Act Pub. L. 118–31, div. A, title XI, § 1112, codified at 5 USC § 3330d.” We note that Section 6612 of the FY 2025 NDAA (PL 118-159) amended this statute to expand its scope to include spouses of employees of the Department of State or an element of the intelligence community. We urge you to clarify that exclusions to the policy include those covered by the amended statute and spouses of other relevant professionals serving the United States.

Without clear and immediate guidance to the spouses of military, diplomatic, and national security professionals, the federal government risks losing these talented personnel and causing undue financial strain for their families. We have a responsibility to ensure that these individuals, who contribute so much to our country’s security, strength, and prosperity, are given the opportunity to thrive in their careers. We ask you to provide waivers to affected individuals and issue immediate government guidance to protect remote work opportunities to the maximum extent possible for military, diplomatic, and national security professionals’ spouses in the United States and abroad.


Sincerely,




Joaquin Castro
Member of Congress



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator




Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator




Tim Kaine
United States Senator



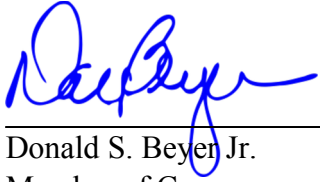
Ruben Gallego
United States Senator



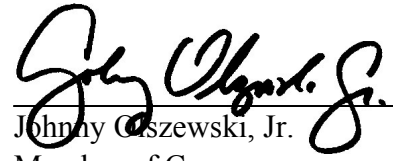
Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



Raphael Warnock
United States Senator



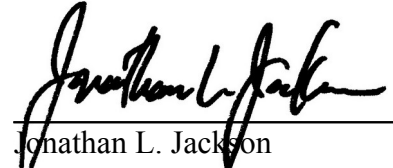
Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress



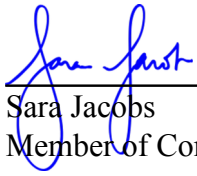
Johnny Giszewski, Jr.
Member of Congress



Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress



Jonathan L. Jackson
Member of Congress



Sara Jacobs
Member of Congress