



The Four Winds

National Weather Service Employees Organization

NWSEO Congressional Supporters Warn White House on Shutdown's Impact on NWS, Employees

(January 24, 2019) Rep. Paul Tonko (D-NY) and eleven other Members of the House of Representatives have sent a letter to the President expressing their concern that the current shutdown is having a negative impact on National Weather Service operations and employees, “putting our national security and life and property at risk and potentially damaging many sectors of our economy.” The letter notes that 3,600 of the 4,200 employees at the NWS are currently working without pay. Although these forecasters, technicians and support personnel continue to provide forecasts and warnings of impending weather, they have been directed to cease other critical services to their communities, such as emergency preparedness with local emergency managers, hurricane preparedness training with vulnerable communities, research and improvement of computer weather models.

The letter notes that the NWS is already suffering a critical staffing shortage despite full funding from Congress and that the shutdown has effectively imposed a hiring freeze that will have a long term negative impact on the NWS's ability to adequately staff the nation's 122 Weather Forecast Offices and specialized forecasting centers. The letter reminds the President that last year the GAO found that the vacancy rate at the NWS had already reached a point where NWS employees were “unable at times to perform key tasks.” The letter explains that the shutdown hiring freeze “will result in a long term reduction in the timeliness, reliability and quality of NWS forecast and warnings.”

The letter was organized by Rep. Tonko, whose district includes the Albany Forecast Office. The letter also signed by the Chair of the House Science, Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX), and the Chair of the Science Committee's subcommittee that has jurisdiction over the NWS, Rep. Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR). Among the signers were Rep. Kathy Castor, Chair of the newly created House Committee on Climate Change, and Rep. Jamie Raskin (D-MD), whose district includes NWS headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, and Rep. Daniel Lipinski (D-IL), whose district includes the Chicago Forecast Office.

Each of these Members of Congress have been strong friends of NWSEO and long-time supporters of NWS employees and their mission. The letter was drafted based on information about the shutdown's impact supplied to Congress by NWSEO.

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**No one cares more for National Weather Service employees than
National Weather Service employees.**

**No one works harder for National Weather Service employees than
National Weather Service employees.**

We are NWSEO.