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355926

March 7, 2016

The Honorable Robert O. Work
Deputy Secretary and Chief Management Officer
Deputy Secretary of Defense
1010 Defense Pentagon, Room 3E944
Washington, DC 20301-1010

Dear Secretary Work:

On behalf of the nearly 270,000 workers AFGE represents in the Department of Defense (DoD), I strongly urge you to ensure that both bargaining unit and non-bargaining unit employees are enrolled simultaneously in the initial rollout of the New Beginnings Performance Management System.

On April 1st, 14,035 DoD employees, a small fraction of the overall civilian workforce, which includes 3,500 employees who are members of collective bargaining units, are scheduled to be enrolled in New Beginnings. This limited initial implementation, a modest first step, is appropriate because it should allow for any problems to be satisfactorily addressed before the rest of the workforce is enrolled in New Beginnings.

However, only non-bargaining unit employees will actually be included in the limited April 1st rollout, and it could be months before bargaining unit members are added, which greatly limits the utility of the start-up and could significantly undermine the entire New Beginnings initiative. Experiences with the first employees enrolled in the New Beginnings system will provide information on how additional employees will be enrolled and what modifications are needed in order to produce a truly successful performance management system.

Is it inevitable that the New Beginnings start-up should be so lopsided, so unrepresentative of the civilian workforce? No, definitely not. The delay in including bargaining unit employees in the initial rollout is because the Department failed to finalize the DoD Instruction (DoDI 1400.25 Volume 31) that created the policies and procedures for the performance management system until February 4th, a mere eight weeks prior to the initial rollout of New Beginnings.ⁱ

Each AFGE Local whose members are included in New Beginnings must by law conclude negotiations over implementation. Since the DoDI is a Department-wide instruction, it leaves many on-the-ground details to be settled at the worksite through Impact and Implementation Bargaining. If DoD had signed off on the Instruction in June and bargaining could have started in September, as was planned, bargaining units would have had a more reasonable amount of time to complete their negotiations over impact and implementation for an

April 1st start. While our Locals will continue to faithfully fulfill their statutory responsibilities to negotiate over implementation, it is inevitable that inclusion of bargaining unit employees in the New Beginnings start-up will be delayed, perhaps by months.

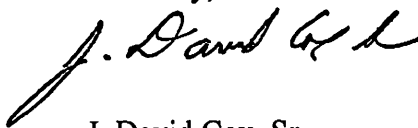
Given that this delay is the result of the inability to finalize the DoDI in a timely manner, I must strongly urge the Department not to move forward on the initial rollout until it is possible to simultaneously enroll both bargaining unit and non-bargaining unit employees so that the start-up can include a workforce that bears greater resemblance to the Department's actual workforce.

I do not make this recommendation lightly. AFGE has been an active supporter of the New Beginnings initiative. Our members participated in the earliest meetings where labor and management representatives began the discussions of how to improve civilian workforce policies. AFGE members were active on the design teams that conducted extensive research and submitted nearly 100 recommendations to the Department of Defense. AFGE has also actively participated in the Implementation Working Group that has been central to designing the rollout of the performance management system. While we would have liked to have seen the Department adopt all of the design team recommendations instead of most of them, AFGE strongly supports the New Beginnings process and system. If implemented correctly, it will help create a culture change in DoD that will reinforce a high-performing, mission-centric engaged civilian workforce.

I want to make this last point absolutely clear: AFGE has been a steadfast partner on New Beginnings. We have neither dragged out implementation to the point where concerned lawmakers refer to this initiative as "Old Beginnings," nor have we very publicly considered taking action on other initiatives which in some cases are flatly inconsistent with New Beginnings. AFGE continues to stand ready to help implement New Beginnings with enthusiasm and dedication so that it can be an enduringly successful reform of the Department's civil service process. However, how this first step is taken towards New Beginnings, particularly with respect to enrolling an initial workforce that is representative of the Department's actual workforce, is of paramount importance.

Thank you for your consideration of my important request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. David Cox, Sr.", with a stylized flourish at the end.

J. David Cox, Sr.
National President

ⁱ It had been anticipated by all stakeholders, including the Department, that the DoDI would be signed and disseminated to DoD components in June 2015. However, its first publication did not occur until November 2015. After the required 30-day comment period, the DoDI was signed by Acting Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness Brad Carson. However, due to the expiration of Secretary Carson's signing authority, the final DoDI was not actually signed and published until early February 2016.