



# AMERICAN FEDERATION OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES, AFL-CIO

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Michael Chertoff, Secretary  
Department of Homeland Security  
3801 Nebraska Ave, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Chertoff:

Shall we continue to debate the personnel system in the Congress, through litigation or shall we jointly design a system that works?

The prior decisions that have now been called into question were not your handiwork, but the next decision will be!

This whole endeavor has only served to distract, demoralize and anger the frontline employees and in so doing negatively impacts the mission. This MAX HR disaster was supposed to improve organizational performance not undermine it.

The frontline employees are now looking to you wondering if you stand for their interests or against them. In the past, the message was a sham where top officials said they cared about the employees, but then proposed regulations that will undermine their standard of living, replace fairness with intimidation, eliminate due process and take away their right to a real voice at work through real collective bargaining. A similar false message from you will only serve to make this situation worse.

As the elected representatives of many DHS employees, we are prepared to sit down with you and help you do it right. That is our charge from those employees. Nobody cares more about the mission of DHS than do these employees and our approach to these issues is grounded in that fundamental belief.

Our voice is their voice. The concerns we offer are their concerns. When we offer criticisms or portray anger, it reflects what we hear from them.

If you shut out our voice, you are shutting out their voice. If you reject our concerns, you are rejecting their concerns. If you dismiss the ideas we offer, you are dismissing their ideas and if you ignore the anger we portray on their behalf, you are really ignoring their anger.

Every town hall, focus group and survey conducted by DHS validated everything AFGE has said along the way. In addition the public comments, mostly from employees, were 98% against the regulations. We ask you to reject those advisors, who for ideological reasons, want to simply put in place a workplace philosophy that is more in line with the late 1800's than the year 2005. Treating these proud and courageous employees as the enemy will not work.

We ask you to throw out the regulations. Sit down with us and let us improve the DHS personnel system together. We can also move forward with collaborative discussions on how to best involve the employees in improving operational issues.

Sincerely,

John Gage  
National President