

Sample Notice to Non-Essential Employees

DATE 2018

Name
Address
City, State, Zip

Dear _____:

This letter is to notify you that, due to the lapse of appropriated funds at midnight January 20, 2018, normal operations of the United States Government are suspended until funding is restored. Most United States Government employees must be furloughed. With respect to the House of Representatives, only those functions which entail or directly support the legislative process and/or the House's other constitutional responsibilities, or that entail safe-guarding of human life, and/or the protection of property, are permitted to continue.

Following a review of the Office's legislative and operational requirements, it has been determined that your position performs a non-essential function to the constitutional responsibilities of Congress and your position is to be furloughed. Accordingly, you are being placed in a temporary, non-duty, non-pay status starting on January 20, 2018, until the furlough ends. This action is an operational and legal requirement; it is not a reflection on your work performance or your value or commitment to the House of Representatives.

During a lapse in appropriations, the United States Government is generally prohibited from incurring a debt during a period such as this. For this reason, you are not permitted to serve as an unpaid volunteer during a furlough. Therefore, you should not report to work and you should cease performing any work-related duties. You should not provide information, answer questions, or offer to provide assistance to the Office or your work colleagues during the period of furlough. This also means you should not "telework" or otherwise perform work from home – for example, you should not access or log on to your House email account or otherwise access the Office server, you should not review or respond to work-related emails, text messages, phone calls or voicemails, and you should not perform any of your duties. Similarly, if you were scheduled to attend training during the period of furlough, that approval is revoked. Due to legal requirements, working in any way during a period of furlough (even as a volunteer) is grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. To avoid violating this prohibition, we strongly recommend that you turn your blackberries off for the duration of the furlough.

As noted above, during the period of furlough, you may not be paid. Unfortunately, the law also prohibits the use of paid leave (e.g., annual, sick, administrative) during furlough. Therefore, if you

had previously been approved for use of paid leave during the period of furlough, we are required to rescind that approval. You may have heard that, in the past, Congress has authorized backpay for a period of furlough.

It is unknown whether legislation will ultimately be passed in this circumstance to provide backpay for the period of furlough and you should plan accordingly. We wish that we could provide you with more guidance on this issue but, due to the fluid nature of the situation, we cannot.

The length of the furlough is unknown at this time. We will do our best to provide current information as the House moves to resolve this difficult issue. You should listen to public broadcasts and when you hear that a continuing resolution or other appropriation has been approved, you will be expected to return to work on your next regular workday.

You can find relevant information at <https://cha.house.gov>, which will contain updates regarding the furlough. Your supervisor may also contact you to advise you when the furlough has ended, or when you might otherwise be called back to work. Because you are not to access your work email during a period of furlough, please make certain that your supervisor has a telephone number or alternate means of contacting you regarding your status other than your work email.

You are encouraged to contact the Office of Payroll and Benefits at B-215 LHOB regarding your current payroll withholdings and employee benefits (i.e., health insurance, Thrift Savings Plan contributions and loans, etc.). Employees impacted by the furlough may also wish to contact the House's Office of Employee Assistance ("OEA") at extension (202) 225-2400 for assistance in handling the difficulties associated with the furlough.

We appreciate the difficulty and anxiety this situation creates and we anticipate restoring you to your position as soon as possible. Should you have any questions regarding this matter, please do not hesitate to contact your manager or supervisor. Thank you for your continued service to the House of Representatives.

Sincerely,

[Member, Committee Chair, Ranking Member, House Officer]