

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 17, 2020

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write to urge you to issue an Executive Order mandating telework for all eligible federal employees and contractors. With 2.1 million federal employees across the globe, 300,000 federal employees in the National Capital Region, and hundreds of thousands of federal contractors across the country, the federal government can help curtail the number of individuals potentially spreading COVID-19 through an immediate telework mandate.

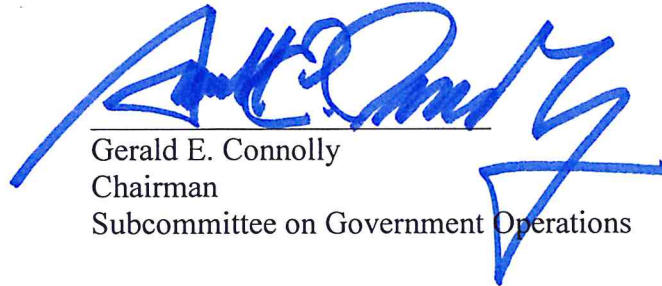
Mandating immediate telework participation to prevent the spread of the disease within the federal employee and contract workforce will also help protect the mission-critical operations of federal agencies. Telework is an essential component of any continuity of operations plan (COOP). According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Federal Continuity Directive 1, "there is a direct relationship between an organization's COOP plan and telework." "Telework can assist the sustainment of essential functions during a change to the normal operating status such as a pandemic..."

To date, the Office of Management and Budget has encouraged federal agency heads to maximize telework flexibilities for populations at a higher risk for serious complications from COVID-19 as well for federal employees in the National Capital Region. We are concerned, however, by reports from constituents that some federal supervisors continue to deny telework requests from federal employees and federal contractors who have the capacity to telework and can do so while supporting agency mission-critical operations. We believe more can and should be done to ensure the health of our federal workforce, our contractor workforce, and our nation. Telework participation must be mandated.

The recent rollbacks of federal telework programs under this Administration present a problem. First, they send the wrong message. We should be making it easier, not harder for federal employees and federal contractors to telework. The most recent annual report on the Status of Telework in the Federal Government found that telework participation contracted for the first time since the enactment of the Telework Enhancement Act. Second, new restrictive telework policies leave agencies less equipped to expand telework operations during times of crisis. This difficulty is evidenced by the current COVID-19 outbreak. The importance of maintaining robust telework operations is a difficult lesson to learn during a national emergency and could cost lives.

We urge you to act immediately in the best interest of the safety and health of the federal workforce, the contractor workforce, and the general public by mandating telework for all eligible federal employees and contractors.

Sincerely,



Gerald E. Connolly
Chairman
Subcommittee on Government Operations

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