

October 27, 2016

Hon. Barbara Mikulski, Ranking Senator
Appropriations Committee
United States Senate
S-146A, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Hon. Nita Lowey, Ranking Member
Appropriations Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Mikulski and Congresswoman Lowey,

As you work to craft a Fiscal Year 2017 (FY17) Omnibus bill, the undersigned organizations are writing regarding the appropriation level for the Federal Labor Relations Authority (FLRA). President Obama has requested \$27.062 million to fund the FLRA for FY17. The House Financial Services bill (HR 5485) funded the FLRA at \$26.631 million, \$431,000 below the President's request. The Senate bill (S. 3067) funded the agency at \$26,070,048, \$1 million below the House passed bill, and \$1.4 million below the President's recommendation. As organizations representing hundreds of thousands of federal workers who rely on the FLRA to provide timely, quality, and impartial resolution of labor-management disputes and to facilitate cooperative, productive and effective labor-management relations, we urge you to fully fund the FLRA. This means funding the FLRA at no less than the House-passed level of \$26.631 million, and more appropriately at the President's requested level of \$27.062.

Holding the FLRA to the Senate level would be devastating, forcing the FLRA to leave vacancies unfilled amounting over the course of FY 17 to an approximately 10% staff cut, thereby resulting in dramatic service cuts. These staffing cuts would have the most dramatic impact on FLRA front-line field services, upon which both agency and union labor relations representatives depend for real-time assistance on a daily basis. While funding at the House Financial Services level would barely allow the FLRA to maintain current service levels, it would still set-back important FLRA labor-management projects that could proceed at the President's requested level. The FLRA offers essential dispute resolution, facilitation and training services that support agency efforts to engage front-line federal employees through their democratically elected labor organizations concerning how to recruit and retain the best employees, improve government services and respond to challenges and changes. The FLRA's work helps ensure that agencies can adapt and change with minimal disruption to government operations by resolving collective bargaining and representation issues in a timely, quality and impartial manner. In light of the ongoing significant demand for FLRA services, our organizations are deeply concerned about whether the FLRA can effectively perform its primary mission functions in a timely manner without the resources called for in the President's FY17 budget proposal.

While we appreciate the efforts of both the House and Senate appropriators, the Senate's FLRA budget number in particular will cripple the ability of the FLRA to properly fulfill their duty. In fact, neither the House nor Senate number reflects the resources necessary to address the realities of the FLRA's funding needs. There are few places in the federal government where you get a better return on investment than at the FLRA. Given the reliance placed on this small agency by the Executive Branch agencies, employees, and labor organizations, we believe that a relatively small increase over the House FY17 FLRA budget number to the President's budget request is in the public interest. Therefore, we urge appropriators to approve a final FLRA appropriation at the President's recommended allocation of \$27,062,000, and under no circumstances, less than the House bill's number of \$26,631,000.

Thank you for your consideration.

American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE)
American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees (AFSCME)
Department for Professional Employees (DPE, AFL-CIO)
International Association of Firefighters (IAFF)
International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAMAW)
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW)
International Federation of Professional & Technical Engineers (IFPTE)
International Organization of Masters, Mates and Pilots (MMP)
Metal Trades Department (MTD, AFL-CIO)
National Association of Government Employees (NAGE)
National Federation of Federal Employees (NFFE)
Seafarers International Union (SIU)
SPORT Air Traffic Controllers Organization