

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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### Ranking Member Gerald E. Connolly Committee on Oversight and Government Reform “The Stay-at-Home Federal Workforce: Another Biden-Harris Legacy” January 15, 2025

Thank you, Chairman Comer, for calling a hearing on this important topic. It feels fitting that telework is the topic of the first hearing of the 119th Congress and the first hearing that I have the privilege of presiding over as Ranking Member of this Committee. **During my first term in Congress, I was proud to coauthor the Telework Enhancement Act of 2010 (P.L. 111-292). In a testament to what we can accomplish when we work together, that bill, which promoted a growing and robust federal telework program, had bipartisan support.**

**Telework used to be something we could genuinely call a bipartisan issue. But Republicans now demagogue the issue to score cheap political points and carry out the directives of billionaire oligarchs who have called for an end to all telework and remote work – no matter who that hurts, including military spouses and people who need workplace accommodations.**

In all we do in this Committee, we should ask ourselves: How can we make the federal government work better for families and hardworking Americans? How can we ensure they are getting the federal benefits they earned and deserve faster and without headache? When it comes to federal telework, we should be focused on employee performance and the bottom line.

**Telework has long been a powerful tool for the federal government to hire, recruit and retain the best employees. Let’s be clear, though: the federal government’s pandemic-era telework policy—maximum telework—was something completely different from the structured telework we created in the Telework Enhancement Act. Maximum telework was an emergency response to a public health crisis that protected workers while ensuring continuity of operations for federal agencies. Some parts of it worked, some didn’t. But regardless, it was terminated. The structured telework programs in place now at federal agencies are contractual agreements designed to maximize benefits to the American people.**

**My Republican colleagues propose throwing out the good with the bad by falsely implying that properly administered and structured telework policies allow federal workers to shirk their duties. But agency performance data just don’t support that argument.**

We know that one-size-fits-all approaches to telework like the ones Republicans have advanced simply aren’t sustainable if we want a federal workforce operating at its best. **The nonpartisan Government Accountability Office found that telework can be a vital tool for agencies to fill high-need positions and that when positions aren’t eligible for telework, it can be very difficult to find anyone willing to do the job.** If our ultimate aim is to attract the most effective workers to serve the American public, why would we prevent federal managers from doing what works to get the job done?

If you listen to the narrative coming from Republicans, you would think that federal telework is anomalous – an aberration in a nation full of private sector workers that report to an office every day. But, once again, the numbers don’t support that assertion.

**In fact, the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office found that private sector workers are working from home more than their federal government counterparts. Telework-eligible workers in the federal government tend to be people who have no shortage of options for higher-paying jobs outside of government.**

And to put it bluntly, younger workers in the labor market expect—and even demand—the flexibility that comes from telework, a reality we must face when we look at our aging federal workforce. Workers over 50 make up 42% of the federal workforce as compared to just 33% in the rest of the labor force. Moreover, about 15% of federal workers are eligible to retire right now.

**Unfortunately, the Republican party wants to make the federal workplace an inhospitable environment and drive workers away—regardless of how that hurts service to Americans.**

**It's a continuation of the cruelty and attacks on federal agencies and federal workers that we saw under the last Trump Administration: pay freezes, executive orders targeting collective bargaining, relocations, and of course, the crown jewel: Schedule F, which would replace nearly 100,000 nonpolitical, merit-based federal workers with partisan lackeys. And Trump is promising to do it all again.**

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today about why they think Republicans chose as their very first witness of the new Congress a pro-worker former Commissioner of the Social Security Administration and whether their attacks on Mr. O'Malley are a preview of an anti-worker agenda bent on cutting Social Security benefits at all costs.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

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