



**Dr. Everett B. Kelley**  
*National President*

**Jeremy A. Lannan**  
*NVP for Women & Fair Practices*

March 6, 2020

Honorable Dale Cabaniss  
Director  
U.S. Office of Personnel Management  
1900 E Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20415

Dear Director Cabaniss:

On behalf of the 700,000 federal and District of Columbia employees represented by the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE), AFL-CIO, I write to you concerning the potentially catastrophic effects of the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) that is rapidly being transmitted around the world, including in the U.S.

In just the last day, at least three cases of COVID-19 have been confirmed in the Washington, DC metropolitan area, and all three afflicted people have been placed under quarantine by authorities. In other U.S. cities, particularly the Seattle area, this highly contagious and sometimes fatal virus has reached crisis proportions.

In response to this urgent threat, OPM has been working with federal, state and local health authorities in trying to respond to the crisis. While AFGE appreciates the information that OPM has been sharing, including the establishment of a prominent COVID-19 section on OPM's website, AFGE urgently requests that OPM issue a memorandum to agencies permitting federal employees who have the capability to telework to begin doing so immediately, regardless of any specific agency action that may have limited telework for other reasons.

At this juncture, we are dealing with a very serious public health crisis, and while there may be differences about the value of telework during "normal" times, this is not a normal time, and telework arrangements under the present circumstances must be understood to relate to the prevention and spread of a world-wide pandemic.

As you know, agency continuity of operations plans (COOP) stress the use of telework during emergencies. Such emergencies have generally been thought of as relating to physical infrastructure damage preventing federal employees from reaching their assigned duty location(s). With COVID-19, it is prudent that public contact be minimized to avoid potential disease transmission. With approximately 350,000 federal employees in the Washington, DC area, many of them telework ready, we cannot state strongly enough that now is the time for OPM to invoke the broadest possible use of telework in the National Capital area.



Director Cabaniss  
March 6, 2020  
Page Two

We also request that OPM immediately allow all federal employees throughout the nation who are capable of performing their duties via telework to begin doing so immediately. Besides the obvious public health prevention benefits, it appears that COVID-19 is already having a significant impact on economic activities. To the extent that federal employees can continue to do their work while avoiding or ameliorating the spread of the disease, this will help to lessen the economic effects of COVID-19 as much as practicable.

I cannot stress how urgent it is for OPM to ensure the well-being of federal employees, reduce the spread of COVID-19 among citizens, and provide the maximum protection of economic activity and vital government services during this crisis through the authorization of widespread telework usage in all federal agencies.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dr. Everett B. Kelley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Dr. Everett B. Kelley  
National President