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January 17, 2019

The Honorable R. Alexander Acosta  
U.S. Department of Labor  
200 Constitution Avenue NW  
Washington, D.C. 20210

Dear Secretary Acosta:

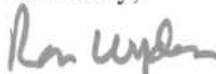
I write to you today to request that the Department of Labor (DOL) issue guidance to ensure that federal employees who are working without compensation during the Trump shutdown are provided with unemployment compensation (UC). We are nearing the month mark for this shutdown, during which, federal employees instructed to continue work have not been compensated and left unable to pay critical bills and purchase the essentials.

As of today, 450,000 federal employees have been working without pay and that number is expected to rise to a half a million as the Administration recalls more workers in the coming days. Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) is required to be paid "on the same terms" and "subject to same conditions" as regular unemployment insurance. Yet, a few states (e.g., California, Connecticut, and Washington), have reached out directly regarding confusion over access to UCFE for non-furloughed federal workers who are working without pay and do not meet the traditional UC criteria.

During the shutdown in 2013, DOL issued timely guidance to state workforce agencies outlining how to help workers access UC benefits. It has been twenty-seven days since the shutdown began and similar guidance has not been issued by your Department leaving states in the dark and hardworking federal employees to suffer.

As the Ranking Member of the Senate Finance Committee, which has jurisdiction over the state-federal unemployment insurance system, I ask for your immediate attention and action. Reopening all federal agencies is an obvious priority. Yet, while we work to make that happen, we cannot ignore the need for UCFE guidance now, especially as the Administration calls more and more federal workers back to work and no end to the shutdown in sight.

Sincerely,



Ron Wyden  
U.S. Senator

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