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National President

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NVP for Women & Fair Practices

March 6, 2020

Andrew Wheeler, Administrator  
Environmental Protection Agency  
[Wheeler.andrew@epa.gov](mailto:Wheeler.andrew@epa.gov)

Dear Administrator Wheeler:

On behalf of the 8,000 EPA 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.

Cases of COVID-19 have been confirmed in cities across the country including the Washington, DC metropolitan area, Seattle, Philadelphia, San Francisco and Atlanta and people have been placed under quarantine by authorities. In some U.S. cities, particularly the Seattle area, this highly contagious and sometimes fatal virus has reached crisis proportions.

While AFGE appreciates the information that EPA has been sharing, including the referral of employees to a prominent COVID-19 section on OPM's website, AFGE urgently requests that EPA issue direction to all EPA leaders and managers immediately permitting the broad use and approval of situational telework. This direction should include direction to managers to approve up to full time telework. This action should be taken 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. Telework arrangements under the present circumstances must be understood to relate to the prevention and spread of a world-wide pandemic.

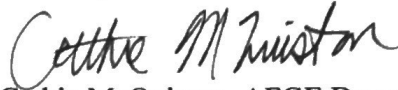
As you know, agency continuity of operations plans (COOP) stress the use of telework during emergencies. Such emergencies have generally been thought of as relating to physical infrastructure damage preventing federal employees from reaching their assigned duty location(s). We cannot state strongly enough that now is the time for EPA to invoke the broadest possible use of telework agency wide.

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



AFGE is ready and willing to work together with EPA to address the challenges facing the agency during this uncertain time. As the AFGE contact person for our EPA bargaining unit employees, I am available to meet with you or your designees in planning the best course of action for EPA. You or your staff may reach me at 202-639-6424 or [mcquic@afge.org](mailto:mcquic@afge.org).

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Cathie McQuiston".

Cathie McQuiston, AFGE Deputy General Counsel

cc: Krysti Wells, LRD