

Amendment 66 – Temporarily freezes hiring of non-essential federal employees

The administration claims that during sequestration it will have to furlough essential government workers which will negatively impact the daily lives of the American people.¹

Despite dire warnings regarding cuts to TSA agents, air traffic controllers, and food inspectors, there have been thousands of new federal job postings since sequestration went into effect.

Prior to sequestration, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued guidance that required agencies to increase their scrutiny over new hiring during sequestration.²

This amendment would simply implement OMB's guidance and freeze hiring of non-essential federal positions during sequestration, but still allow hiring of employees defined by the Office of Personnel Management as "excepted," or "emergency" personnel.³

This amendment freezes non-essential hiring during sequestration but allows for hiring of critical workers.

The amendment does not freeze hiring of "excepted" or "emergency" employees, as defined by OPM.

OPM defines "excepted" employees as those "who are performing emergency work involving the safety of human life or the protection of property or performing certain other types of excepted work."

The "other types of excepted work" caveat gives agencies the necessary flexibility in defining which types of new hires are performing critical duties and exempted from the hiring freeze.

Agencies are not heeding OMB's advice on new hiring, and without this amendment will continue to post openings for non-essential positions.

During the first seven days of sequestration there were 2,126 new federal job postings. Each weekday there are 500-600 new federal jobs posted online.

The government has sought to hire Travel Specialists, Recreation Aides, Public Affairs Specialists, Outreach Managers, Leadership Development Specialists, Librarians, Historians, Painters, Administrative Assistants, and many other non-essential positions.⁴

The Department of Health and Human Services posted a job opening for a "Travel Specialist" with a maximum salary of \$97,000 per year.⁵

The Travel Specialist's job is to "obtain domestic and international travel" for HHS officials.

¹ See, for example: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/02/08/fact-sheet-examples-how-sequester-would-impact-middle-class-families-job>

² OMB Memorandum M-13-05, available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/memoranda/2013/m-13-05.pdf>

³ OPM Furlough Guidance, available at <http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/furlough-guidance/guidance-for-shutdown-furloughs.pdf>

⁴ See generally: www.usajobs.com

⁵ See, for example: <https://www.usajobs.gov/GetJob/ViewDetails/338948700>

Not only is this position non-essential to the overall mission of HHS, it actually facilitates more travel by HHS employees.

HHS should be cutting back on its international travel, not hiring someone to make booking flights easier.

Freezing this type of non-essential new hiring could prevent furloughs to government workers with mission-critical duties.

Some of these non-essential positions may be helpful for the agency, but should not take priority at a time when we are threatening furloughs to air traffic controllers.

The average new hire equates to one furlough day for 250 current government employees with average salaries.⁶

Canceling job openings at the Federal Aviation Administration for two Community Planners and four Management and Program Assistants would spare as many as 1,000 Air Traffic Controllers from one furlough day.⁷

Canceling just one job opening for a librarian at the Department of Agriculture could offset one furlough day for as many as 750 entry-level food inspectors.⁸

⁶ (52 weeks per year X 5 days per week) – 10 federal holidays = 250 days.

⁷ Total salaries for these 6 positions = 4 full time air traffic controllers. 4 controllers X 250 work days = 1000 controllers furloughed for 1 day.

⁸ 1 Librarian salary = 3 entry level food inspectors' salaries. 3 inspectors x 250 work days = 750 inspectors furloughed 1 day.