

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 18, 2023

The Honorable Janice Lachance
Chair
Federal Prevailing Rate Advisory Committee
1900 E Street NW, Room 5H27-G
Washington, DC 20415

Dear Chair Lachance:

I write to urge the Federal Prevailing Rate Advisory Committee (FPRAC) to consider and vote on a longstanding proposal to redefine the Federal Wage System wage area for Monroe County, Pennsylvania, during its upcoming meeting on September 21, 2023. A vote on this proposal would signal a renewed push by the Committee to address the existing pay disparity between Federal Wage System (FWS) and General Schedule (GS) employees both in Pennsylvania and across the country, which would be celebrated by the working people and families currently shortchanged by this inequity.

The pay disparity between FWS and GS employees is not new to the Committee. In fact, the issue has been included in Committee meeting agendas for years. In October 2010 and March 2012, FPRAC even voted to consolidate FWS wage areas that lie within GS locality pay areas and recommended that change to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). These recommendations would directly address this pay disparity for thousands of federal employees, but OPM has so far failed to implement the change.

As a result, hourly workers at federal facilities and military installations across the country continue to be paid on different—and less generous—pay schedules than their salaried counterparts. This is the case at more than ten military installations across the country, including several in my state of Pennsylvania. For example, at Tobyhanna Army Depot in Monroe County, salaried, or GS, employees are paid based on the New York-Newark locality pay area while their hourly, or FWS, colleagues are paid based on the Scranton-Wilkes Barre wage area. Similarly, salaried workers at Letterkenny Army Depot in Franklin County are paid according to the Washington-Baltimore-Arlington locality pay area while hourly workers are compensated according to the Hagerstown-Martinsburg-Chambersburg wage area.

Not only is this disparity unfair to the workers—many of them union members—that keep these installations running, but it also undermines the clear language and intent of federal law, which provides that the rates of pay for prevailing rate employees are to be “maintained so as to attract

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and retain” those employees.¹ In other words, even though the law already requires the federal government to pay competitive wages to keep good workers, we’re seeing real harm in the real world from failing to meet that obligation. We have already lost good public workers, and it is time to act.

My office has heard directly from installation management, affected employees, and union representatives about the difficulties that this disparity poses on multiple facets of installation operations, including recruitment, retention, and employee morale. Because of the disparity, these installations are losing talent to both public and private sector employers that offer more competitive wages, threatening the strength of our federal workforce.

I urge the Committee to take meaningful action on the Monroe County/FWS-GS pay disparity issue during FPRAC’s upcoming meeting. Renewed Committee action on this longstanding agenda item would go a long way in signaling to OPM the need for swift and substantive change. I am committed to seeing this reform through and would welcome your partnership. It’s time that the blue-collar, union workers impacted by this disparity in Pennsylvania and across the country are paid fairly and on par with their salaried colleagues.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Fetterman', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

John Fetterman
United States Senator

¹ 5 U.S.C. § 5341 (1972).