

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 15, 2017

The Honorable Sean J. Stackley
Acting Secretary of the Navy
1000 Navy Pentagon
Washington, DC 20350

Dear Secretary Stackley:

We write today requesting your attention to recent amendments to the Joint Travel Regulations (JTR) affecting civilian public shipyard employees who are required to work on long-term temporary duty (TDY) assignments. Specifically, we ask that you delegate waiver authority for these new provisions to the Commander of Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA), as is authorized by the JTR and National Defense Authorization Act for FY17 (NDAA).

The Per Diem, Travel, and Transportation Allowance Committee (PDTATAC) authorized two recent changes to the JTR which are now in effect. The first change allows the Secretary of the Navy to authorize reimbursement of actual expenses for meals and incidental expenses (M&IE) up to the locality rate when the flat rate for M&IE is insufficient to meet the traveler's needs. The second change allows the Secretary to waive the receipt requirement for travelers on long-term TDY authorized to receive actual expenses up to the full locality rate when requiring receipts will negatively affect mission performance or create an undue administrative burden. In both cases, the JTR states that the waiver approval authority may be delegated as low as the three-star general or flag officer level.

Congress sought these provisions in Section 672 of the NDAA signed into law late last year, and we are pleased that DOD and the Navy have worked to implement these policy changes. Nevertheless, we understand that shipyard workers are struggling to navigate the administrative process to receive waiver determinations in a timely manner.

The waiver authority for these provisions, as delegated by the Secretary of the Navy in May 2016, currently rests with the Navy PDTATAC Principal. Congress' intention in providing for these changes in the NDAA, however, was for the Service Secretaries to delegate approval authority to a close enough command level so as to provide efficient and appropriate review of waiver requests originating from shipyards. Thus, we strongly urge you to delegate waiver authority for these provisions to the Commander, NAVSEA, and to thereafter encourage his immediate approval of all appropriate waivers. We believe the NAVSEA Commander, who manages an annual budget of nearly \$30 billion and an organization of 70,000 civilians, military, and contractors, would possess the perspective and judgment fitting for decisions on the use of these JTR waiver authorities for Navy shipyard workers.

In a time of increasing global threats, our Navy is providing our first line of defense, ensuring that critical national security objectives are met. The civilian workers at our public naval shipyards serve a vital role in this effort, ensuring the continued effectiveness of our Fleet by conducting essential maintenance on our Navy ships and submarines while away from home on long-term TDY assignments. These workers should not have to worry that they may have to pay

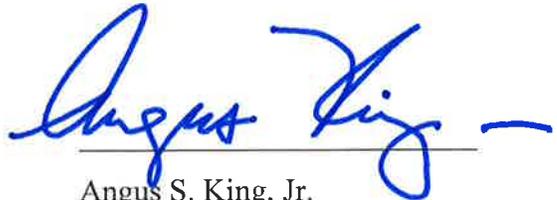
out of their own pocket for official travel expenses nor spend their valuable time collecting and administering receipts. Additionally, we should afford our dedicated shipyard workers the courtesy of eliminating any undue burden caused by administrative delays associated with the waiver approval processes.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue, and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Susan M. Collins
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Mark R. Warner
United States Senator



Brian Schatz
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



Patty Murray
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator