



*National Weather Service
Employees Organization*

February 28, 2011

Dear NWS Employee,

There has been a lot of confusion over the last several weeks about the NOAA and NWS budget, about furloughs, the stability of our jobs, and the stability of the agency for whom we work. In a nutshell, the previous Congress left office without an appropriation for the government to run on. Instead, they wrote a stopgap measure that funded the entire government including the NWS through March 4. The new Congress wrote a new stopgap measure to fund the government from March 4 through the end of the fiscal year. However in this measure, House bill, HR 1, they made huge cuts in programs like the EPA, NPR and NOAA. In fact, the portion of the NOAA budget where NWS gets most of its funding, the NOAA OR&F, was among the hardest hit. The NOAA OR&F budget was cut by \$454 million. That is the amount cut for the whole year and with a half of the year over, the amount of savings will have to be found in the next six months, making the impact as if the budget were cut by almost a billion dollars. The NWSEO has no specific information on how much of that cut will come from the NWS, however if the NWS OR&F budget is proportionally cut, the NWS will be out approximately \$126 million dollars. When we asked NOAA what the NWS cut is, they said they did not specifically know, but that NWSEO's calculations are in the ballpark. Early in the process, the NWSEO obtained impact documents that included furlough options, with the worst being a 27 day unpaid furlough for all of us. All of this has been documented in NWSEO press releases. The impact plans that we have seen so far only address a savings of \$62 million, even if the most extreme plans are used. I have no idea how the NWS planned to make up the other \$60+ million. I should also note that we have not been able to get impact plans for any of the other bargaining units represented by the NWSEO.

A little over a week ago, HR 1 passed the House of Representatives and it is now at the Senate. It is our hope that the Senate will fully fund NOAA and the House of Representatives will agree. However, if they do not come to an agreement, the government will shut down due to lack of funds. In that case, most NWS and NESDIS employees, considered "essential" will continue to work and eventually get paid. At this time, we do not have specific information as to which employees will be in this essential group, in spite of repeated requests. It appears that the other NOAA and OAR employees represented by the NWSEO will not be included in this group.

There is a lot of discussion as to whether the House and Senate will agree to a stopgap 2 week continuing resolution to fund the government and keep it open a little longer. We have heard conflicting information on this. The Administration and the media seem to think this is very likely. However, we have recently heard from the Senate that the chances of a shutdown are much greater than what is being reported. In any case you should prepare yourself financially in the event of a

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shutdown. Keep in mind that even if you are lucky enough to be an essential employee, the folks at the National Finance Center may not be.

There is very little the NWSEO can do to prevent a government shutdown; however you and your coworkers under the banner of the NWSEO have done an absolutely incredible job fighting to ensure NOAA is fully funded for the remainder of FY 11, and I am sure we are making an impact on FY 12 as well. Numerous media outlets around the country have carried our story thanks to your co-workers contacting TV stations, newspapers and emergency managers around the country. One of our stewards set up a Facebook community called Protect the National Weather Service and one of our private sector meteorology friends has been spending thousands of dollars of his own money advertising the site for us. There are now about 32,000 members in the community and a huge percentage of them have stated that they have contacted their Congressperson. The site has reached more than one million views. We are also hearing from Capitol Hill that our efforts are having an impact. The lobbying arm of the NWSEO has at the same time been working this issue, both individually and with the "Friends of NOAA." We have been making progress in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. We have also been encouraged to continue our efforts by members of both the Democratic and Republican Parties.

Finally, none of this is free. We are a very small union, we may have a big mouth but we have a small wallet. In my opinion, we have been much more effective than any other federal sector labor union in fighting for funding for its parent agency. Yet, we are one of the smallest national unions in existence. This effort is stretching our resources very thin. If you are currently a member, thank you very much. We could not do what we do without you. If you are not a member, please considering joining. It is simply not fair that your co-workers have to carry the financial burden to fight to keep all of us employed. If twice the number of people in the agency joined the NWSEO, dues could be half as much for everyone. We are the only organization whose entire existence is focused on making sure that you have employment and that your working conditions are the best they can be. If this falls into your hands and you are a member of management, do not forget you can join the NWSEO as an associate member.

NWSEO is easy to join. You can join using payroll deduction with Standard Form 1187 to have the current dues of \$21.37 deducted per pay period. For more information, please visit our website at <http://nwseo.org/joinnwseo.php>.

NWSEO is the only organization with the ability to lobby Congress and the Administration to preserve NWS jobs, promote better working conditions and career promotions for NWS, and participate in collective bargaining. We want you to realize the strength of union membership. We need to keep the pressure on Congress. Your strength, your membership, is needed now more than ever.

Sincerely,



Dan Soblen
NWSEO President

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