



State of New Hampshire

GENERAL COURT

CONCORD

Christopher T. Sununu
Governor of New Hampshire
107 North Main Street
Concord, NH 03301

Gordon MacDonald
Attorney General
33 Capitol Street
Concord, NH 03301

Dear Governor Sununu and Attorney General MacDonald,

Today about 2,400 Granite State federal employees will miss their second consecutive paycheck, resulting in 1,600 New Hampshire citizens working for free. Since the federal government shut down more than one month ago, federal employees and their families have been struggling to pay for necessities like their mortgages, groceries, and heating fuel. In addition, all USDA related programs such as SNAP (food stamps), WIC, free and reduced lunch, at risk after school meals and all other child/adult meal programs do not have funding nor does it appear there is any solution for funding past the end of February, putting the basic needs of thousands of Granite State children and senior citizens at risk.

This is the longest shut down in U.S. history and there appears to be no end in sight. New Hampshire simply cannot wait for Washington D.C. to act. We ask you to take the following immediate actions on behalf of Granite State families:

I. Fight for New Hampshire's Ability to Help Our Residents.

During this shutdown, federal workers deemed "essential" are not being paid, but are required to work. We understand there are about 1,600 of these workers in New Hampshire. New Hampshire should join States like California and Vermont that have already begun providing unemployment insurance to these workers.

Unfortunately, the President's administration has cruelly threatened sanctions against states that try to help these workers with unemployment insurance (See attached letter). Such a threat defies the long-standing purpose of unemployment insurance under the Social Security Act of 1935 to defray the impact of lost wages through no fault of a worker. It also undermines the federal-state partnership that forms the basis of the unemployment insurance program.

We urge you to leverage your close relationship with the current administration to obtain clearance for New Hampshire to issue unemployment insurance to our residents. Should such an effort fail, we ask you to immediately pursue any and all available legal recourse on behalf of New Hampshire and our workers, including seeking a declaratory order and preliminary injunction in federal court.

II. Take Action Today to Help Granite Staters.

As Governor, you have the authority to act today to help Granite Staters. We urge you to take the following immediate steps:

First, direct the Commissioner of Health and Human Services (HHS) to develop a plan to use TANF reserve funds and/or any available funds from the HHS lapse funds to ensure that all Granite State recipients of SNAP (food stamps), WIC, free and reduced lunch, at risk after school meals, and all child/adult meal programs are held harmless throughout the federal government shutdown. In doing so, provide the public and the General Court a detailed plan as well as a report of the projected monthly costs of the plan. We stand ready to work with the Fiscal Committee to approve transfers that may be necessary to accomplish this purpose.

Second, direct the Commissioner of New Hampshire Employment Security to immediately begin issuing unemployment insurance benefits to Granite State residents who are federal employees working without pay, provided that such benefits must be paid back at zero interest and over a reasonable period of time in the event of resolution that includes back pay for such workers. In doing so, all work search, availability, and overpayment requirements shall be otherwise waived, including as outlined in RSA 282-A:165 and 282-A:31.

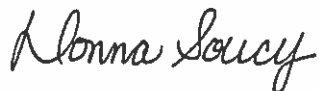
Third, direct the Office of Strategic Initiatives to immediately and on an emergency basis provide heating assistance through the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program to Granite State residents who are federal employees, immediately making all adjustments and seeking all waivers necessary to provide assistance, including waiver of any standard income look-back provisions.

Finally, direct the Commissioner of New Hampshire Employment Security to refer Granite State residents who are federal employees receiving unemployment insurance to the Office of Strategic Initiatives and the relevant Community Action Program for the purpose of applying for possible heating assistance.

Conclusion

Your immediate action is the fastest way to get hardworking Granite Staters the help they need right now. An end to the shutdown is in everyone's best interests, and we hope that you can use your good relationship with the current White House to encourage a resolution. We look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,



Senate President Donna Soucy



Senate Majority Leader Dan Feltes



Speaker of the House Steve Shurtleff



House Majority Leader Doug Ley