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CONGRESSMAN ROB SIMMONS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
SECOND DISTRICT, CONNECTICUT

March 30, 2004

ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
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VETERANS' AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH
CHAIRMAN

Dr. David S. C. Chu
Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness
Room 3E764, The Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301
VIA FAX: 703-693-0171

Dear Dr. Chu:

I am writing to you after speaking at length with the presidents of three of our local units of the National Association of Government Employees (NAGE).

All three union presidents are deeply troubled by the Department of Defense's recently released "Pre-Collaboration Labor Relations Systems Options." Their first concern was that although the National Security Personnel System (NSPS) should have been developed jointly by the Department of Defense (DoD) and the Office of Personnel Management, it was instead prepared without any input from the Office of Personnel and Management (OPM).

My contacts have brought to my attention several points that concern me. First, they have said that the word "consultation" has been substituted for collective bargaining. I believe that means that the DoD need only consult with the unions if they want to make significant changes in working conditions. Furthermore, I understand that an internal board of DoD's appointees would replace binding resolution.

Second, they have told me that our veterans would lose their veteran's preference if they are employed by the DoD. I believe our nation's veterans have earned that designation and cannot understand why the DoD, of all departments, would want to remove it.

Third, I understand that a large number of employees, including some clerical and professional, would be prohibited from joining a union. I represent a large number of employees of the Naval Undersea Warfare Center, most of who are professional engineers and scientists. These people have elected to be unionized and I firmly believe that is their right.

As a member of the House Armed Services Committee, I understand and support the DoD's goal to work toward greater flexibility over its personnel structure. However, I believe our valued civilian employees, whose dedicated service contribute so much to our nation, must have the right to work in a free and fair environment.

I realize that the process of developing the changes has not been completed and that some of the information I have received may already have been reconsidered. Therefore, I would appreciate receiving your comments and clarifications in this matter.

All the best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rob Simmons" in a cursive style. To the right of the signature, the letters "CT/2" are written in a similar cursive hand. The signature is positioned above the printed name and title.

Rob Simmons
Member of Congress
Second District, Connecticut