
From: Acting Secretary Seth Harris Public
Sent: Wednesday, February 20, 2013 4:13 PM
Subject: The Impact of Sequestration

Dear Colleagues:

As all of you know, across-the-board spending cuts—commonly referred to as sequestration—are scheduled to go into effect on March 1. These automatic cuts apply to all federal agencies and the vast majority of federally funded programs.

Here at the Department of Labor, we are dedicated to advancing the interests of workers, wage earners and retirees. And many of our programs and services are mandated by law. So even in the face of sequestration, we must continue to carry out the Department's mission to the best of our abilities.

In the State of the Union, President Obama outlined a vision for the nation that cannot be realized without a vibrant Department of Labor. The President called for renewed effort and attention to "the true engine of America's economic growth—a rising, thriving middle class."

The President then urged us to ask ourselves these questions as a nation: How do we equip our people with the skills needed to do those jobs? And how do we make sure that hard work leads to a decent living?

Of course, those are the questions we confront at the Department. So we must find a way to continue our work -- the work that the American people need and expect from us -- even in the face of these looming cuts.

But I have to be candid. We are in for some difficult times. The Department is taking steps to soften the impact of the sequester. Agencies are reducing travel and training expenses. The Department will freeze performance awards for an indefinite period. Contract dollars that do not directly support the mission will be curtailed.

But it is clear from the size of the sequester that not all agencies will be able to find the savings required. These agencies will be forced to place staff on unpaid furloughs.

I personally hoped that furloughs could be avoided -- because they will disrupt the important services we provide to the American people and because of the impact on your livelihood and your families.

Those agencies for which employee furloughs could not be averted in meeting the sequestration law's requirements are being asked to work closely with OASAM and the Human Resources Center. We will do everything that we can do to ensure our employees receive the proper notice and have the information they need to manage the impact on their families. Throughout the process, the Department will work closely with its unions and managers to ensure that we follow proper procedures.

Working together, I am confident that we can get through this. This is in no way a reflection on the Department of Labor, its work or its employees. I know that you will continue to do your best on behalf of the American people.

Thank you for your hard work and your service.

Sincerely,
Seth D. Harris
Acting Secretary
U.S. Department of Labor