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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

February 1, 2012

To all federal employees:

Last week, the Republican Majority introduced H.R. 3835, and the House leadership has fast-tracked the bill, bringing it to the House of Representatives for a vote tonight. This bill would extend, by one additional year, the pay freeze that currently applies to federal employees through December 2013. Unlike previous legislation, the Republican bill also includes a pay freeze for Members of Congress.

By linking Congressional pay to compensation for the men and women of our federal civil service, H.R. 3835 represents yet another inappropriate effort to politicize federal employees' pay and benefits, all the while continuing attacks on federal employee wages, health care, and retirement.

I support a continued freeze on Congressional pay, and I have added my support as a cosponsor to legislation (H.R. 3858) which would do just that. But I strongly oppose extending the pay freeze for federal employees for a third consecutive year. Certainly, we are in tough economic times, but federal employees have been unnecessarily targeted, again. The Republican message is clear; they would rather freeze the wages of middle class civil servants than raise taxes on millionaires and billionaires.

El Paso is home to over 12,000 civil servants, and a significant portion of those work along the border. Extending the pay freeze will put further economic burdens on these hard-working Americans and will further widen the pay gap between federal workers and the private sector. A recent report by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) confirmed that federal employees earn 26 percent less than those with similar jobs outside the government, and this report debunks the myth my Republican colleagues continue to press that federal employees are overcompensated for the work they do serving their fellow Americans.

Hard-working federal employees secure our borders, care for our veterans and protect our air and water for future generations. These dedicated men and women have already made significant sacrifices to help reduce our government's budget deficit by enduring a two-year pay freeze, and they face the possibility of layoffs and furloughs in coming years as overall government spending shrinks.

I want to reassure all the federal employees in El Paso that I will continue to fight against attacks that jeopardize their livelihoods. Federal employees pledge to serve their nation, and I pledge my support to them.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Silvestre Reyes". The signature is stylized and includes a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Silvestre Reyes
Member of Congress