



DOD USES 'EFFICIENCY INITIATIVE' TO REPLACE THOUSANDS OF WORKERS WITH CONTRACTORS

Federal workforce cap drives DoD agencies to use costly contractors for mission-sensitive work

WASHINGTON, Nov 03 2011 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- The Defense Department is slashing thousands of mission-critical jobs, including HazMat responders and employees who maintain and distribute supplies for our war fighters, and intends to contract out many of those functions in direct violation of federal law.

The Army alone plans to cut its civilian workforce by more than 8,700 positions by the end of September 2012 and already has begun eliminating critical positions at West Point and other locations across the country. The Air Force, meanwhile, plans to cut 6,000 civilian positions during the fiscal year that began Oct. 1. The Navy has identified more than 5,000 jobs to be eliminated, while more than 3,000 will be cut in the Marine Corps.

“DoD has imposed this artificial cap without any approval from Congress. They’re putting tens of thousands of hardworking federal employees on the street and shifting all of that work to more expensive contractors,” said Don Hale, chairman of AFGE’s Defense Conference (DEFCON), which represents civilian employees throughout the Defense Department.

The cuts are being carried out as part of the Pentagon’s so-called “Efficiency Initiative,” in which the department has arbitrarily capped the civilian workforce at fiscal 2010 levels. As part of that initiative, the department said it would not hire contractors to take over the lost civilian jobs. However, AFGE has learned that the department intends to do just that – violating not only its own policy but also federal laws that prohibit the department from managing its civilian workforce by arbitrary constraints.

“Laying off federal workers and converting those jobs to contractors is going to cost taxpayers more and it’s only going to add to the jobs crisis this country is facing,” AFGE National President John Gage said. “The Pentagon must put an immediate halt to these nonsensical and downright illegal actions.”

Gage called attention to a recent study by the Project on Government Oversight, which reported that “on average, contractors charge the government almost twice as much as the annual compensation of comparable federal employees.”

“Given the POGO report, taxpayers should be asking why DoD would use this controversial ‘Efficiency Initiative’ to conduct more wasteful contracting out,” Gage said.

An internal memo obtained by AFGE reveals that the Defense Department intends to replace all of its hazardous material first responder teams with a centralized contractor. This is a direct violation of federal laws that prohibit DoD from contracting out federal jobs without first determining that taxpayers would

benefit from such conversions. Similar plans are underway for other activities, notably jobs in blue-collar occupations.

“This is an underhanded way of contracting out our jobs,” Hale said.

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The American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) is the largest federal employee union, representing 625,000 workers in the federal government and the government of the District of Columbia.

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