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**For Immediate Release
June 9, 2006**

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Statement of NTEU President Colleen M. Kelley on Calls to Restrict Telework in Federal Agencies

Increased calls to restrict the expansion of telework programs throughout the federal sector in the name of increased data security are misplaced and counterproductive. The solutions to data security problems reflected in recent incidents of loss involving the Veterans Administration and the Internal Revenue Service lie not in placing roadblocks in the way of expanded teleworking by federal employees, but rather in increased security measures impacting the data themselves. Measures by agency managers, such as encrypting sensitive information and limiting access strictly to those who require such access for the performance of their duties, should not only be commonplace on the part of government agencies, they should be mandatory. The momentum for increasing teleworking and the multiple benefits it brings both employees and their agencies is both undeniable and unstoppable. Rather than seeking to impede or curtail it, we ought to be attacking problems associated with securing information in ways to accomplish that desirable end without restricting the growth of a program that boosts employee productivity and morale, and has a positive impact on communities by helping reduce the flow of traffic.

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