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Kelley Calls on Homeland Security Subcommittee to Pull Funding for MaxHR

Washington, D.C.—The leader of the union representing thousands of frontline homeland security workers today called on senior members of a key House subcommittee to redirect \$41.7 million in the administration’s fiscal 2007 budget request for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) from a personnel system found to be illegal and toward critical personnel needs at the nation’s ports of entry.

President Colleen M. Kelley of the National Treasury Employees Union (NTEU) made the request in a letter to all the members, including Rep. Harold Rogers (R-KY) and Rep. Martin O. Sabo (D-MN), chairman and ranking member, of the House Appropriations Homeland Security Subcommittee. That body is taking up the DHS budget proposal tomorrow.

“As the committee considers funding levels for DHS for fiscal 2007,” she wrote, “NTEU urges you to fund CBP (Customs and Border Protection) frontline security and trade enforcement needs before spending any additional taxpayer dollars on an undeveloped, untested, legally-compromised new DHS personnel and pay system.”

The president’s budget proposes \$41.7 million—a 133 percent increase from the previous year—for implementation of MaxHR, the proposed DHS personnel and pay system, along with

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funding for establishment of pay pools and the proposed Homeland Security Labor Relations Board, while devoting only \$32 million for additional port of entry personnel.

President Kelley pointed out that significant portions of the proposed personnel regulations have been enjoined by a federal court; and while DHS has appealed the ruling, a decision by the appellate court is not expected until later this year. NTEU is lead counsel for all DHS unions in that case.

“It is likely,” she wrote, “that legal activity involving the proposed pay and personnel system will continue through this year and next.”

The NTEU leader called on the committee to redirect the \$41.7 million to fund needed staffing increases at land, air and sea ports of entry. The administration’s budget proposal of \$32 million for personnel provides funding for an increase of just 21 employees for border security, inspection and trade facilitation at the nation’s 317 ports of entry. Even Jayson Ahern, CBP Assistant Commissioner recently said in testimony before Congress that staff levels for CBP are "not where we're supposed to be under the Homeland Security Act."

“In terms of adequate staffing at the border, the president’s proposal is shockingly inadequate,” Kelley said.

NTEU is the largest independent federal union, representing some 150,000 federal workers in 30 agencies and departments, including nearly 16,000 in CBP