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March 11, 2020

The Honorable Mark T. Esper
Secretary of Defense
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Secretary Esper:

I am writing as a follow up to our discussion at the House Armed Services Committee hearing on February 26, 2020, to express my ongoing concern regarding President Trump's January 29, 2020, Memorandum to the Department of Defense (DOD), "Delegation of Certain Authority under the Federal Service Labor-Management Relations Statute" (memo).

The DOD has been bargaining with its workers since the 1960's and has been included in the Federal Service Labor-Management Relations Statute since its inception. Throughout this time, which includes U.S. involvement in numerous conflicts and national emergencies, there is no evidence that collective bargaining agreements have hindered U.S. national security or had a negative impact on DOD's mission. In fact, a unionized workforce has enhanced our security by creating and retaining highly skilled workers, providing a safe workplace and improving workers' quality of life, who might otherwise choose to work elsewhere in the private sector.

I appreciate your candor at our DOD posture hearing on the 26th and was encouraged to know that this authority was not requested by you. I would again respectfully ask that you share with me and the Committee your analysis of this memo and any recommendations that are made, well in advance of carrying out any new authorities provided by this memo.

In an era of great uncertainty abroad and as the Department is looking at modernizing the force, we need a strong, stable, highly trained workforce to meet the challenges. I fear that this memo only increases instability in the workforce and undermines our national security objectives.

I appreciate your attention to this important issue and look forward to working with you to strengthening our workforce today and in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Donald Norcross".

Donald Norcross
Member of Congress