

HAROLD ROGERS
5TH DISTRICT, KENTUCKY

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
STATE AND FOREIGN OPERATIONS
RANKING MEMBER
SUBCOMMITTEE ON DEFENSE



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1705

PLEASE RESPOND TO:

- WASHINGTON OFFICE:
2406 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-1705
(202) 225-4601
- DISTRICT OFFICES:
551 CLIFTY STREET
SOMERSET, KY 42503
(606) 679-8346 OR
1-800-632-8588
- 48 SOUTH KENTUCKY HIGHWAY 15
HAZARD, KY 41701
(606) 439-0794
- 110 RESOURCE COURT
SUITE A
PRESTONSBURG, KY 41653
(606) 886-0844

June 17, 2021

Kathleen McGettigan
Acting Director
U.S. Office of Personnel Management
1900 E St NW
Washington, D.C. 20415

Dear Acting Director McGettigan,

I write to express my serious concern that many federal offices remain in a telework status, severely decreasing their ability to serve the American people. It has now been 15 months since field offices suspended face-to-face service to the public and began extensive telework. With weekly COVID-19 case numbers at their lowest point since March of 2020, over 64% of adults in the U.S. having received at least one vaccination dose, and all states easing or completely lifting pandemic restrictions, it is clear these offices should be open and fully staffed to pre-covid levels to allow them to fulfill their duty—serving the American people.

I appreciate the June 10, 2021 guidance to heads of executive departments and agencies outlining steps to begin reopening federal offices. It is a step in the right direction. However, offices which provide face-to-face or direct assistance to the American people should be prioritized and brought back to pre-pandemic levels as soon as possible.

The elimination of face-to-face assistance has had serious negative effects on my constituents' ability to seek assistance from the Federal government. While some telephonic and online options exist, many of my constituents seeking assistance live in rural areas with poor cell phone service and limited broadband access, making it nearly impossible for some individuals to submit applications online. Many have been unable to navigate these systems without assistance and have simply given up on trying to apply for their benefit—an unacceptable outcome. It is imperative that these Americans are able to visit a local office and receive the in-person assistance they need.

Further, while tele-work status has allowed many Federal employees to safely weather the pandemic, it has also dramatically reduced productivity. It now takes months for veterans to access their services records at the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC)—far too long. In fact, a constituent in my district was unable to be buried at his desired resting place—the Mill

Springs National Cemetery—because the NPRC was unable to furnish his records. This is a disgrace.

Social Security application and processing times have grown astronomically, preventing my constituents from receiving the critical health care and benefits they need. Passports and Visa application processing times have grown exponentially, making it more difficult for my constituents to travel outside of the United States, and more difficult for the United States, and Kentucky, to attract visitors from other countries.

It is time for the Federal government to get to back to work for the American people. I urge you to prioritize the return to pre-pandemic staffing for offices that provide critical assistance to the public, and request an update on when offices providing face-to-face or direct assistance to people will reopen. If you have any questions, please contact my Washington, DC office at (202) 225-4601. Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Hal Rogers". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

HAROLD ROGERS
Member of Congress

HR: RS