



# **Presidential Candidate Questionnaire**

**2020 National Election**



## Campaign Information

Candidate's Name: \_\_\_\_\_Joseph R. Biden\_\_\_\_\_

## About the American Federation of Government Employees

The American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO (AFGE) is a labor union proudly representing 700,000 federal and D.C. government workers in 65 agencies across the nation and overseas. These hardworking Americans inspect our food and water, secure our borders, airports, and federal buildings, care for veterans, and connect the elderly, disabled, and students with vital benefits. They preserve our national heritage in parks and seashores, care for and supply active duty troops, research and prevent the spread of disease, keep dangerous criminals off our streets, and so much more.

The federal workforce is the most diverse workforce in the United States – and proud to be so. Eighty-five percent of federal employees live and work outside the DC-Maryland-Virginia region, supporting local economies in every corner of all 50 states. Federal workers are highly trained with over thirty percent having obtained a master's degree or higher, two-thirds having completed at least their bachelor's degree, and an additional ten percent with an associate's degree or skilled trade certification. One in four federal employees are veterans of the armed services.

It is impossible to sustain a democracy without a professional and committed civil service to deliver the public services that meet the needs of the American people. And it is impossible to develop an apolitical, professional civil service if federal employees are disregarded, demonized, and economically disadvantaged by their boss, the President of the United States, or by Members of Congress. The constant attacks on this workforce have taken a tremendous toll on agencies' ability to accomplish their vital missions.

Through executive orders, bad-faith bargaining, and regulatory mischief, the current Administration has loosed a direct attack on our members' union rights and dignity on the job. This includes purging lawful representational activity from government worksites and equipment, weaponizing the bargaining process to propose, and in some cases impose, one-sided contracts, attacking our statutory right to collect voluntary dues, crippling our ability to mediate disputes on duty time, and more. Taken together, these attacks constitute more than just a threat to our members' livelihoods, they threaten the survival of the merit-based civil service system on which our government is built.

When federal and D.C. government employees go to the polls, they elect more than just a President, but a CEO. How the President chooses to wield their considerable influence over the workforce bears a tremendous influence on the day-to-day lives of our members and their families. We present you with this questionnaire to better understand how you, if elected, intend to use that influence. Federal employees are ready, capable, and motivated to build a better future for our fellow Americans. With the proper leadership from an engaged executive who truly understands the value of her/his workforce, there is truly no limit to what this nation can accomplish.

# Questions on Government-wide Issues

## 1. Due Process and Collective Bargaining Rights

**Background:** In order to protect against politicization and other forms of corruption, federal personnel policy has been based on a set of “merit system” principles that guarantee that federal employees are hired, managed, and fired solely on the basis of objective factors or “merit.” Thus, federal employees have due process rights of appeal of adverse actions and the right to collective bargaining over non-economic conditions of employment. The latter has involved the right to negotiate and utilize a grievance and arbitration process for resolution of workplace issues. The Trump administration has used its authorities to undermine these rights in numerous instances.

**Question on Due Process and Collective Bargaining Rights:**

***Do you commit to reversing the Trump administration’s executive orders and policy directives aimed at weakening federal employees’ due process and collective bargaining rights on your first day in office?***

Yes. I will reinstate and expand protections for federal employees. The federal government should serve as a role model for employers to treat their workers fairly. Yet, [Trump](#) has [gutted](#) the ability of federal employees to collectively bargain, [stripped](#) them of their union representation, and made it [easier to fire](#) federal employees without “just cause.” On my first day in office, I will restore federal employees’ rights to organize and bargain collectively, restore their right to official time, and direct agencies to bargain with federal employee unions over non-mandatory subjects of bargaining. I will aggressively hold the line against any effort to undermine workers’ rights and to diminish federal employees’ right to due process in the workplace.

Because of Trump and Congressional Republicans’ inaction, the Merit Systems Protection Board, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and Occupational Safety and Health Administration -- agencies that work on issues important to the well-being and safety of federal employees -- all have vacancies in their leadership positions. I will prioritize ending these vacancies to ensure that our federal workers, and workers throughout our country, are protected.

My commitment to federal workers is why I’ve earned endorsements from unions and advocates with an interest in improving the lives of public sector workers. For example, I am honored that the International Association of Firefighters, which includes federal employees, has endorsed me for President of the United States.

## 2. Federal Employee Pay and Benefits

**Background:** Federal employees have been forced to relinquish more than \$300 billion in pay and benefits since 2011, mostly in the name of fiscal austerity. This aggregate loss reflects the three-year pay freeze followed by years of nominal pay adjustments during the Obama presidency, as well as two separate pieces of legislation that shifted the cost of the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) to employees hired after 2013.

President Trump's budgets have all included proposals to freeze federal pay, impose drastic cuts to federal retirement benefits while shifting costs for the diminished benefit onto employees and eliminating the FERS defined benefit altogether for newly hired employees. He has also proposed reducing the government's share of the premium for health insurance under the Federal Employees Health Benefit Program (FEHBP). President Trump has attempted to distort the data that show a large and persistent gap between federal salaries and those paid to workers who perform similar jobs in the private sector and state and local government.

### **Questions on Federal Employee Pay and Benefits:**

**(A) Do you commit to support the repeal of cost-shifting in FERS that was enacted to mitigate the effect of budget deficits caused by stimulus spending during the 2007-2009 recession?**

Yes. I support repealing the cost-shifting in FERS and oppose proposals to decrease the government's share of federal workers benefits.

**(B) Do you commit to support pay adjustments that align with the Federal Employee Pay Comparability Act (FEPCA) and which aim to restore the lost purchasing power of federal pay since 2011?**

Yes. I commit to consistent and regular pay increases, which are a critical component of ensuring federal salaries remain competitive and that federal employees can support their families.

**(C) Do you commit to oppose any and all efforts to reduce benefits under FERS and FEHBP?**

Yes. Our federal employees deserve fair compensation and should not be subject to cuts in health insurance premiums or other critical employee benefits. The federal government should lead by example and provide high quality benefits, instead of pushing anti-worker budget adjustments designed to shift the burden of health care and retirement costs onto employees.

### 3. Federal Employee Job Security

**Background:** The job security of federal employees is threatened on two fronts, privatization and the attempt to replace career tenure with “gig” or temporary contract employment. Privatization or outsourcing in the federal government has grown enormously over the past two decades. The size of federal service contract workforce is unknown, but academic research suggests it now stands at roughly three times the size of the in-house workforce and numbers around six million. Independent estimates of the relative cost of federal employees as compared to service contractors find that contractors cost from between 25% to 50% more than federal employees who perform the same work.

The decision to outsource work that has been identified as “commercial” is supposed to be made according to cost, as measured through a process set forth in OMB Circular A-76. Congress has prohibited agencies from outsourcing through the A-76 process, however, because of the Circular’s severe flaws as described by both the Government Accountability Office (GAO) and the DoD Inspector General, the privatization or outsourcing of federal jobs continues to increase.

**Question on Federal Employee Job Security:**

***If elected, would you preserve the prohibition on the use of OMB Circular A-76 unless and until the flaws identified in Congress’s moratorium are rectified?***

Yes. As president, I will work to maintain a career federal workforce and fight efforts to privatize or outsource federal jobs without adequate justification and a fair, objective, and evidence-based process. In addition, I will order a review of positions and work that have been outsourced over the last several years to determine if that work would be better or more appropriately performed by career civil servants. I agree that there were many federal positions that were inappropriately contracted out especially in the early days of A-76. Limiting the number of temporary employees will require addressing issues such as hiring delays and staffing shortages due to hiring freezes, sequestrations, and furloughs. I will work to address the causes of excessive temporary hires and further support hiring policies such as veterans preference and military spouse hiring.

### 4. Federal Employee Job Quality/Job Tenure

**Background:** President Trump’s “President’s Management Agenda” proposed that most new hiring in the federal government be restricted to renewable temporary and term appointments. Temporary employees have no civil service protections (no due process rights) and thus cannot appeal an adverse action such as a suspension or termination

even if it is for a reason that would be illegal for a career employee. Temporary employees are not covered under FERS, and term employees are unlikely to work long enough (at least five years) to vest in the system.

The FY 2017 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) authorized a pilot program to allow all of DoD's attorneys and "cyber" employees to be hired for terms of between two and eight-year terms with the possibility of renewal at agency discretion.

***Question on Federal Job Quality/Tenure:***

***If elected, would you commit to maintaining a career federal workforce and resist efforts to transform federal employment into a series of "gigs" that risks possible politicization in hiring and firing, deprives agencies of institutional memory and continuity, and leaves employees with few rights and no economic security?***

Yes. Career federal employees -- those in Washington and in federal offices all across the country and the world -- are dedicated public servants who do the jobs essential to keep our country running. These are some of the most talented, hard-working and inspiring people you will ever meet. Some Republican leaders use federal employees as scapegoats for any problems in the government as part of their strategy to reduce the size of the government. As president, I will value the contributions of federal employees and make sure they are protected and rewarded for their hard work. I won't be able to do my job without them. Turning career federal positions into "gig" positions limits workers' ability to obtain fair wages, benefits, and safe working conditions.

## **5. Federal Employee Union Rights: Collective Bargaining, Payroll Dues Deduction, and Official Time**

### **Collective Bargaining**

**Background:** The Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 codified collective bargaining rights for federal employees, arguing that collective bargaining "safeguards the public interest." The statute excludes pay and benefits as subjects of bargaining and prohibits federal employees from striking. The law requires agencies and federal employee unions to bargain "in good faith" over a grievance and arbitration procedure, and the conditions of employment. Agencies and unions *may* bargain over numbers, types, and grades of positions, technology, methods, and means of performing work, and appropriate arrangements for employees affected by the exercise of management authority.

***Question on Collective Bargaining:***

***If elected, would you require executive branch agencies to bargain in good faith over both mandatory and permissive subjects of bargaining as described in Chapter 71 of Title 5?***

Yes. On my first day in office, I will restore federal employees' rights to organize and bargain collectively, and will direct federal agencies to bargain with federal employee unions over mandatory and permissive subjects of bargaining.

**Payroll Dues Deduction**

**Background:** In the last Congress, legislation was introduced to eliminate automatic dues deduction for federal employee union members. All federal employee unions, including AFGE, are voluntary organizations; dues are only paid by those federal employees who have chosen in writing to join the union. Payroll dues deduction is an efficient means of collecting dues and imposes virtually no cost on federal payroll administrators. This legislation would not save the taxpayers one penny. Payroll dues deduction is almost universal in unionized private sector and state and local government workplaces. Indeed, the sole purpose of this legislation is to deprive federal unions of the resources their members have elected to provide to them. cripple federal employee unions.

The Trump Administration is compelling all agencies to impose contract articles requiring a union member to formally affirm permission for payroll dues deduction to one year, at which point it would need to be manually renewed by each member each year. That is, the union would have to sign up each of its members every single year. The effect of this legally questionable policy would be to have the agency decide for the employee to quit the union each year until the employee overruled the cancellation of membership and rejoined. This policy would kick every single union member off the dues rolls every single year in an effort to limit participation in union membership, irrespective of their desire to remain a member.

***Question on Payroll Dues Deduction:***

***If elected, would you oppose all efforts, legislative and administrative, to eliminate or burden voluntary payroll dues deduction? Would you repeal all provisions in collective bargaining agreement contracts that involve a requirement for annual cancellation of a union member's authorization of dues deduction?***

Yes. The Trump administration is using a union-busting playbook to silence the voice of workers and weaken their ability to fight back against his disrespectful and demeaning behavior towards federal employees. In the Biden Administration, federal employees will not be treated like the enemy and union activity will be embraced and honored, including automatic dues deductions.

**Official time**

**Background:** By law, federal employee unions are required to provide representation on duty time for all employees in bargaining work units that have elected union representation,



even including for those who choose not to join the union and pay dues. Fulfilling this legal obligation is in the public interest because it serves to resolve countless workplace issues before they escalate to the point of litigation or cause costly turnover when employees have no recourse other than to quit, ensuring the harmony of the workforce and keeping the focus on serving the public.

In exchange for the legal obligation to provide the same service to those who pay union dues as well as those who choose not to pay, the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 provides for collective bargaining between federal employee unions and agencies to bargain over appropriate amounts of “official time” – the right to duty time used for the purpose of representing employees at unionized workplaces. Official time is only used for specific representational activities, and does not and cannot, involve any, be used for any type of internal union business. Official time may only be used to resolve conflicts in the workplace, for purposes such as implementing new training programs and new policies, ensuring workplace safety, resolving workplace disputes, and achieve administrative efficiencies. Simply put, official time is a fundamental part of the collective bargaining and employee engagement structure in the federal sector.

Use of official time has come under severe attack under the current Administration in the form of a failed executive order (which was enjoined by a federal court), weaponization of the bargaining process, and from anti-union Members of Congress who have introduced legislation and offered amendments to severely restrict or in some cases, eliminate it completely.

***Question on Official Time:***

***If elected, would you repeal all executive actions and provisions of imposed agreements that place severe restrictions on the legal, proper and reasonable use of official time?  
Would you oppose Congressional efforts to do the same?***

Yes. Official time is a sacred function of union stewards. Restrictions on official time prevent union representatives from adequately representing union members, which perpetuates unfair treatment and abuse of workers’ rights. I know the importance official time plays in the ability for our government to effectively function by allowing employees to give mission critical input in their workplace and creating a more effective and efficient government. In a Biden Administration, official time will be protected.

## **6. Funding Lapses, Spending Caps, and Federal Employee Furloughs**

***Background:*** The 35-day shutdown that began in December 2018 and carried over into February 2019, the three-day shutdown in January 2018, the 16-day shutdown in 2013 and the 5-day and 21-day shutdowns in 1995 and 1996 all inflicted tremendous harm on federal employees. Even though in each case Congress provided backpay to both excepted and non-excepted employees, the period of going without a paycheck had negative consequences from their inability to stay current on rent, mortgages, credit

card payments, childcare and child support, alimony, and other financial obligations. In no case was a funding lapse in any way caused by federal employees, but federal employees have been forced to bear the brunt of the budget impasses.

***Question on Funding Lapses and Federal Employee Furloughs:***

***If elected, would you support legislation that provides for a permanent and indefinite appropriation for the payment of federal salaries during agency funding lapses?***

Yes. I support legislation that ensures federal employees are not penalized for harmful shutdowns. I will also consider other options to achieve this goal in addition to a permanent and indefinite appropriation.

The uncertainty of budget showdowns can be a source of great stress for federal employees trying to make ends meet and are harmful to the dedicated public servants who keep our country running. Federal employees should never be harmed by a government shutdown, like the Trump shutdown in 2018-2019. It is unacceptable that 800,000 federal employees, including hundreds of thousands of veterans, were put into positions of hardship due to political fighting. Not only was this hard on working families, it also compromised our safety. In my administration, workers, their safety, and the safety of the public will come first above all else.

## **7. Preventing Discrimination Against Federal Employees**

***Background:*** President Trump has questioned the political loyalties of federal employees and has attempted to undermine the scientific integrity of the work performed by scientists in numerous agencies. The administration has actively supported hiring, firing and pay “reforms” that create the kind of managerial discretion and lack of accountability that create avenues for discrimination. Specifically, the administration has supported “direct hiring” over open competition for federal jobs. It has endorsed restrictions on the right of federal employees to appeal adverse actions and the lowering of evidentiary standards for managers to justify their actions against employees. And it supports replacing the highly non-discriminatory federal pay system, which assigns pay on the basis of job duties rather than the personal characteristics of job holders, with one that lets managers vary salaries individual by individual.

***Question on Preventing Discrimination Against Federal Employees:***

***If elected, would you support the measures to protect federal employees from all attempts to allow political considerations to affect their hiring, firing, assignments, or performance assessments? Would you support allowing federal scientists full academic freedom and the right to absolute integrity in their scientific endeavors? Would you support retaining the federal pay system’s approach of assigning salaries based on job duties rather than the individual characteristics of employees?***

Yes to all.

## Questions on Agency-Specific Issues

### Department of Veterans Affairs

**Background:** For over a decade, AFGE has decried the persistent understaffing of the Veterans Administration and the risk this poses to the agency's vital mission. As of March 2019, the VA reported over 50,000 vacant positions across the system – an increase of several thousand over the previous year. Since 2014, VA's access crisis has triggered increased scrutiny from Congress, but the solution has been terribly misguided. Rather than place more doctors, nurses, mental health professionals and other on the wards at VA medical centers across the nation, politicians responded by significantly increasing the use of private sector care and private sector provider networks under the deceptively-named "Choice" program.

In the five years since, the VA has been consistently starved of much needed staff and infrastructure dollars in order to prop up the costly, wasteful, and unaccountable "Choice" privatization program. In 2018, the Administration's agenda to privatize our country's largest, best, and most cost-effective health care system advanced significantly with the passage of the VA Mission Act. This law threatens to undermine veterans' health care through massive privatization and depletes the Department's core capacity. If the Mission Act is not reversed, we believe that VA healthcare will be harmed to the point of no return.

No other health care system in the country offers the comprehensive, integrated veteran-centric care, clinician training and medical research available through the VA, and maintaining this unique health care community is a core part of the promise our country has made to veterans. It is AFGE's firm belief that no person or company should extract a profit from caring for America's veterans.

#### **Question on the Department of Veterans' Affairs:**

***Do you support full staffing and funding of VA in-house medical care and related services at levels that recognize the true cost of war and the complex, unique needs of veterans of all generations who have earned the right to integrated, veteran-centric care with their service? Do you support rolling back wholesale privatization of veterans' care and expanding the expert, veteran-centric, integrated care they receive in the VA system?***

Yes. Our nation has a sacred obligation to properly prepare and equip our troops when we send them into harm's way, and to care for them and their families—both while they are deployed and after they return home. President Trump has repeatedly failed our veterans and ignored

this sacred obligation, and I strongly oppose the current administration's attempts to privatize and dismantle the VA.

As president, I will ensure that we provide our veterans world class health care to meet their specific needs. I will conduct a thorough assessment of the staffing needs and requirements across the VA to inform specific hiring initiatives and programs for attracting and retaining medical professionals. This includes ensuring that professionals are working to the full scope of their license and creating incentives to support health care professionals joining the VA workforce.

In addition, I will modernize VA hospitals and clinics to serve our veterans better through a nationwide infrastructure plan that provides a comprehensive refresh of VA health facilities. I will retrofit VA's existing brick and mortar physical locations, where patient volume warrants, and repurpose older facilities to meet new needs such as assisted-living facilities and long-term care alternatives. I will improve both the buildings and equipment, so the VA continues to lead in providing 21st century care. And I will improve health care access, quality, and customer experience by seamlessly augmenting direct care with purchase care enabled under the Mission Act.

I will also enhance the administrative, financial, and operational systems that underpin the provision of care in the network model by improving vital case management systems, quality oversight, integrative health treatments and supporting administrative, financial and IT systems. These reforms will help ensure access to high-quality care and a first-rate customer experience that satisfies all veterans, regardless of where they receive care.

Finally, I will ensure that VA employees have a voice in their workplace.

## Department of Defense

**Background:** The Trump Administration has pressed Congress to establish a separate civilian personnel system for Department of Defense (DOD) employees under title 10, removing DOD civilians from current and longstanding rights and protections provided to most other federal civilian employees under title 5, relating to civil service laws.

The gist of the Administration's proposal would be to allow DOD to write its own personnel rules, stripping civilian employees of many due process protections, and pay and tenure rights. The proposal would encourage DOD to make employment "gig" oriented (temporary or term appointments), and abolish employees' rights to bargain over conditions of employment. DOD attempted to roll out this proposed new civilian personnel law through the "Space Force," a legislative proposal that the Administration championed.

Fortunately, the Administration's proposal to establish a "Space Force" met heavy resistance in Congress. Nevertheless, the Administration is doing all it can to undercut federal employee due process rights, including the right to unionize and bargain.

***Question on Department of Defense:***

***Would you oppose the establishment of a separate civilian personnel system for DOD, as well as other agencies?***

Yes. I understand the broad diversity of jobs in DOD and other agencies and the role of various hiring authorities in providing the best workforce for these jobs. I support the civilian personnel system for the federal government that permits flexibility so that every organization in the government, including the DOD, has the use of the most effective authorities to meet that organization's needs, while providing the protections necessary for a thriving work environment regardless of the authority or agency.

## **Bureau of Prisons**

***Background:*** Federal correctional workers are often called the forgotten law enforcement because they go to work every day locked behind the walls and fences of our federal prisons. These men and women do a very dangerous job every day, supervising more than 180,000 federal inmates at 122 federal prisons across the country. Chronic understaffing has been a problem at federal prisons for years and has contributed to the death of at least one of the three correctional workers who have been killed in the line of duty since 2008.

Understaffing has also led the Bureau of Prisons to rely on augmentation to meet their staffing needs. Augmentation is when a correctional worker such as a teacher, secretary or nurse is made to work as a correctional officer instead of their assigned duties. This creates a safety issue for all workers in the prison, as well as inmates, since there are less staff on duty to respond to an emergency and inmates are left frustrated when their programming has been cancelled because the teacher of the GED class, for example, has been augmented into another job for the day.

***Question on Bureau of Prisons:***

***If elected, will you ensure there are sufficient appropriations to hire adequate staff for our federal prisons? Will you ensure that Congress continues to include language in appropriations bills to direct the Bureau of Prisons to end its overreliance on augmentation and instead hire full time correctional officers?***

Yes. As president, I will support sufficient appropriations to hire adequate staff for our federal prisons. If we don't provide enough funding and prisons are forced to reduce staff or rely on

augmentation, we are putting our corrections officers, other correctional workers, and incarcerated individuals at a greater risk.

## **Department of Homeland Security**

### **Transportation Security Administration**

**Background:** Seventeen years after Congress created the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and professionalized the screening workforce in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001, the 42,000-member Transportation Security Officer (TSO) workforce remains without the statutory workplace rights and protections enjoyed by nearly all other federal workers. Instead, TSOs work under the whim of the TSA Administrator who issues a “determination” of what rights they will have during his or her tenure. These rights vary by administration, the very antithesis of what should be a statutory, apolitical personnel system.

TSOs are a professional and dedicated workforce. They have proven their worth by preventing another act of terrorism against the U.S. with expertise earned by extensive training, upholding a standardized set of security procedures, and meeting the requirements of thorough background checks. Yet Congress and successive administrations have failed to recognize TSOs as holding a status equal to other federal employees by according full Title 5 coverage. Title 5 coverage would bring them under the General Schedule pay system and grant them the same collective bargaining rights as other federal employees, including federal law enforcement officers. It is long past time for Congress and the President to grant the same statutory rights and protections to TSOs as other federal workers.

#### ***Question on TSA:***

***If elected, will you support legislation ensuring Title 5 rights and protections to the TSO workforce?***

Yes. TSA employees are dedicated public servants who keep us safe and ensure our airports operate as efficiently as possible. TSA employees should be allowed to collectively bargain and receive the same federal work protections as other federal workers. Sufficient rights and protections for TSA employees will lead to lower turnover, which ultimately will lead to a safer air transportation system and more protection for American travelers. I support legislation that provides the TSO workforce with Title 5 rights and protections.

### **Overtime Pay for Border Patrol and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)**

**Background:** In 2016, Congress passed a law that replaced Border Patrol agents eligibility for Administratively Uncontrolled Overtime (AUO) Pay with a system that requires agents to choose a biweekly schedule of 80 hours, 90 hours with a 12.5 percent increase in base pay, or 100 hours with a 25 percent increase. If an agent works hours in excess of his/her chosen

schedule, the only option is compensatory time off. There is no eligibility for FLSA-based time and a half overtime pay. DHS has tried legislatively to replace ICE agents' eligibility for AUO with a similar overtime pay plan that likewise denies FLSA overtime eligibility.

***Question on Border Patrol and ICE:***

***If elected, will you support the restoration of FLSA overtime eligibility for Border Patrol Agents and similar eligibility for ICE agents who choose an alternative to AUO?***

I support AFGE's efforts to ensure equal pay for DHS's law enforcement officers.

## **Social Security Administration**

***Background:*** Between FY 2010 and FY 2018 the number of employees working in Social Security field offices and teleservice centers has dropped alarmingly, despite the increases in claims and a steady level of calls to the 800-number and visits to field offices. Teleservice center employees have been reduced by 13% and field offices by 10%, resulting in a deterioration of in-person services. In addition to staff reductions, SSA has closed at least 67 field offices from FY 2010 to present. Recent closures have happened despite a failure to follow protocols regarding both Congressional and public notice or provide a rationale for closure. Polling has consistently shown that the public prefers in-person service, particularly when navigating complicated benefit needs or facing the loss of the family breadwinner. Further, low-income families and individuals often have limited access to a secure internet.

***Question on Social Security Administration:***

***If elected, will you ensure adequate funding for field offices in order to maintain timely services provided to the public? Will you further ensure that funding for teleservice centers is maintained at current or greater levels?***

Yes. Social Security represents a bedrock commitment, a promise to seniors that they can enjoy a secure retirement after a lifetime of hard work. Ensuring that benefits are easy to access and that field offices and teleservice centers are fully funded is key to that commitment. Cutting Social Security services will only hurt the most vulnerable in our communities at a time when we are seeing an increase in demand for access to social security offices. I assure you, in a Biden Administration, I will fight to fund this service to meet the needs of beneficiaries today and into the future.