




Office of the Attorney General

Washington, D.C. 20530

March 22, 2013

MEMORANDUM FOR ALL DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE EMPLOYEES

FROM: THE ATTORNEY GENERAL 

SUBJECT: Sequestration and Safety Actions Regarding the Bureau of Prisons Institutions

On March 21, the Congress enacted the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2013, providing full Fiscal Year (FY) 2013 funding for federal agencies. Unfortunately, the act did not provide any relief from the sequestration budget reductions of over \$1.6 billion for the Department that became effective on March 1. As a result, the Department is confronting significant funding and operational challenges across every component, with serious consequences for the administration of justice. Nevertheless, we must continue to perform our mission on behalf of the American people. While I recognize we need to take action to absorb these deep cuts, our actions must not threaten the life and safety related operations of the Department.

This week, using my limited authorities to transfer and allocate existing funds from within the Department, I provided \$150 million to the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) to avoid furloughing correctional workers at our prison institutions. Absent this intervention, we faced the need to furlough 3,570 staff each day from the federal prisons around the country. The loss of these correctional officers and other staff who supervise the 176,000 prisoners at 119 institutions would have created serious threats to the lives and safety of our staff, inmates, and the public. I am thankful for the full and immediate support our action received from the Administration and from our congressional appropriations subcommittee chairs and ranking members: Senator Barbara Mikulski; Congressman Frank Wolf; Senator Richard Shelby; and Congressman Chaka Fattah.

The Department's actions can protect BOP's facilities only through the end of the fiscal year in September and these actions do not address the serious life and safety issues that the BOP faces next year under continued funding at the post-sequestration levels. Further, none of the Department's actions can mitigate every harm faced by BOP.

I recognize that other components of the Department perform critical life and safety, national security, and criminal justice services on behalf of the public. I am deeply troubled by the impact the sequester will have on the Department's capacity to prevent terrorism, combat violent crime, partner with state and local law enforcement agencies, and protect the judiciary and our most vulnerable citizens. I am also troubled by the damaging impact of these cuts and

resultant furloughs on you, our Justice workforce. I am still evaluating whether we have the ability to avoid other furloughs in the Department this year. I will do all that I can to minimize the impact of these events on your lives.

We have already required extensive cuts to travel, training, contracts, and other areas of spending in order to maintain our mission priorities. The Department will continue to explore additional options to minimize the harm of sequestration to our mission and to our employees. As I have said before, this is a time that requires our resilience. Now, more than ever, we need to work together as colleagues to protect our core functions and discharge our fundamental responsibilities. As more information on our status becomes clear I will continue to keep you informed.