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Congress of the United States
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August 14, 2020

The Honorable John Ring, Chairman
National Labor Relations Board
1015 Half Street, SE
Washington, D.C. 20570-0001

The Honorable Peter B. Robb, General Counsel
National Labor Relations Board
1015 Half Street, SE
Washington, D.C. 20570-0001

Dear Chairman Ring and Mr. Robb:

We write to urge the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) to reconsider its decision to restructure the field offices of the western United States, including its Region 19 Office in Seattle. As reported in Bloomberg News, this reorganization would centralize the assignment of unfair labor practice cases, preventing cases in the Region from being handled by labor law experts with the appropriate familiarity of the Region.¹

This Regional Office plays a crucial role in resolving labor disputes, and the attorneys in that office are experts in both labor law and in the labor-management issues of the Region. As the COVID-19 pandemic imposes an enormous strain on workers and employers, this reorganization would sideline the expertise of NLRB staff in the Regional Office. This reorganization would also mean that, in emergency situations, it would be significantly harder to investigate, litigate, or settle labor disputes. This is of special concern in District 19, since there are industries and workforces highly specific to the Region, including fisheries, forestry, ports and tech.

Moreover, we are also extremely concerned that this reorganization will effectively demote Regional Director Ronald Hooks. Regional Director Hooks is one of the longest-serving Regional Directors in the country, and he has devoted his career to protecting workers' rights. He is one of three Black Regional Directors who will be effectively demoted by this reorganization, exacerbating underrepresentation of the NLRB's senior staff.

The NLRB's attempt to enact this major overhaul without any notice to the public is alarming. The agency's General Counsel assured Congress two years ago that he would notify the public

before beginning any reorganization, and the NLRB's past practice has been to brief Members of Congress on changes affecting their districts.ⁱⁱ Therefore, we urge the NLRB to pause this reorganization plan, and to set up a briefing on how these changes will affect workers, unions, and employers throughout the Region. We request a briefing for all Region 19 offices no later than August 26th, prior to any reorganization.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter, and we look forward to working with you to quickly resolve this situation.

Sincerely,



PRAMILA JAYAPAL
Member of Congress



EARL BLUMENAUER
Member of Congress



SUZANNE BONAMICI
Member of Congress



RICK LARSEN
Member of Congress



KIM SCHRIER, M.D.
Member of Congress



DENNY HECK
Member of Congress

ⁱ Robert Iafolla, "Democratic Lawmakers Decry NLRB's Reorganization Plan," *Bloomberg Law* (Aug. 6, 2010) <https://news.bloomberglaw.com/daily-labor-report/nlr-set-to-reorganize-western-case-assignments-democrats-say?context=search&index=7>; *see also* Robert Iafolla, "Top NLRB Lawyer Denies Responsibility for Reorganization Plan," *Bloomberg Law* (Aug. 14, 2020) <https://news.bloomberglaw.com/daily-labor-report/top-nlr-lawyer-denies-responsibility-for-reorganization-plan> ("The NLRB's top lawyer...confirm[ed] that agency officials have proposed restructuring certain supervisory functions for the affected regions.").

ⁱⁱ Letter from Peter B. Robb, General Counsel of the National Labor Relations Board, to Rep. Robert C. "Bobby" Scott, Rep. Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan, and Rep. Donald Norcross (Mar. 1, 2018) (stating that, if a restructuring of Regional Offices was warranted, the NLRB would "work to develop potential plans to be shared publicly").