[Your Name]

[Your Address]

[City, State, ZIP Code]

[Email Address]

[Phone Number]

[Date]

Dear (Representative or Senator) [Last Name],

I am writing today on behalf of the National Association of Farm Service Agency County Office Employees. Our association represents the nearly 7,000 county-based U.S. Department of Agriculture employees who deliver farm programs directly to production agriculture. Our Farm Service Agency (FSA) county offices are the one stop shop for America’s farmers and ranchers. We urge you to oppose any efforts to cut federal employee benefits as part of the budget reconciliation legislation.

FSA County Office employees work face to face with farmers, ranchers, and landowners in our communities. Maintaining pay and benefits is necessary to retain current staff and recruit future employees. We believe any reductions to salaries and benefits will result in less competitive job opportunities when compared to private sector employment.

* **Eliminating FERS Supplemental Retirement Payments**

The FERS supplement provides crucial financial support to federal employees who retire at or after their minimum retirement age, typically 57, by filling the gap in income until they become eligible for Social Security benefits at age 62. This supplement helps ensure retirees can maintain a stable income during the transition period between their federal service and full Social Security eligibility.

* **Raising FERS Contribution Rates for all federal employees, regardless of when they joined the workforce, to 4.4 Percent.**

The effect of raising the FERS contribution rate would amount to a 3.6% pay cut for federal employees hired before 2012 and a 1.3% pay cut for federal employees hired in 2013. These cuts add up and harm dedicated and hard-working federal employees.

* **Basing FERS Retiree Benefits on High-5 Instead of High-3 Salary**

This proposed change would reduce the retirement annuity of federal employees, undermining the terms they agreed to when they first entered public service. Altering the conditions of retirement that were established at the outset not only disrupts long-term retirement planning but also represents an unfair breach of trust. Federal employees made career decisions based on the understanding that certain benefits would be available to them upon retirement. Shifting these terms retroactively undermines the stability and security that these workers have earned through years of service.

* **Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB)**

Requires a comprehensive audit of employee dependents currently enrolled in FEHB plans – such as checking marriage certificates and birth certificates – and requires ineligible individuals found to be receiving FEHB coverage be disenrolled.

Federal employees have dedicated their careers to serving the American people. Often, federal employees accept modest compensation relative to the private sector. Proposals to reduce retirement benefits, increase contributions to pensions without corresponding increases in pay, or limit cost-of-living adjustments not only erode the economic security of these workers but also send a damaging message about the value placed on public service.

I respectfully ask you to oppose any such proposals and instead support a fair, sustainable budget that protects those who keep our government running. Thank you for your attention to this matter and your continued support of FSA county office employees.

Sincerely,

[First and Last Name]