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August 8, 2018

The Honorable Jeff T. H. Pon
Director
Office of Personnel Management
1900 E Street, NW
Washington, DC 20415-1000

Dear Director Pon,

I am writing in support of the Federal Salary Council's and the President's Pay Agent recommendations that San Luis Obispo County be integrated into the Los Angeles locality pay area from the Rest of the United States (RUS) status.

San Luis Obispo County meets the criterion set by the FSC of "being almost or entirely surrounded by higher paying localities," and having only .44 percent of its land boundary (1.1 out of 245 miles) connected to a RUS county. The locality pay change would remedy a long-standing inequity for San Luis Obispo County Federal employees and resolve a detrimental recruitment and retention challenge.

For example, Bakersfield, CA is the largest city in Kern County, an inland county bordering San Luis Obispo County to the east. The cost of living in Bakersfield is 44 percent less expensive than the City of San Luis Obispo and Kern County was added to the Los Angeles-Long Beach, CA locality pay area in 2016. Kern County now has a higher locality pay than San Luis Obispo County.

Due to San Luis Obispo's proximity to higher locality pay areas, federal employees are frequently moving to other federal jobs in these higher paying areas with lower costs of living. This results in the loss of qualified federal employees from San Luis Obispo County. It also results in frequently vacated or perpetually open positions that are difficult to recruit for and fill.

The veterans of San Luis Obispo County have felt the impact of recruitment and retention problems acutely at both the Veteran Administration's Community Based Outpatient Clinic and the Vet Center, where positions for medical professionals and counselors have gone unfilled. I have had veterans tell me personally they forego seeking medical assistance they are entitled to because of the delay of service caused by the lack of staffing.

I commend the San Luis Obispo County Federal employees who have shown they are dedicated to public service and I believe they should be able to afford the cost of living in San Luis Obispo County with their respective salaries. That is why I support integrating San Luis Obispo County into the Los Angeles locality pay area as recommended. Thank you for considering this matter.

Sincerely,



Salud O. Carbajal
Member of Congress