

From: [REDACTED]

Date: June 16, 2023 at 11:33 [REDACTED]

Cc: [REDACTED]

Subject: Current SSA employee and military spouse seeking your support

Greetings from [REDACTED] Japan!

My name is [REDACTED] and I am currently an employee of SSA for almost 9 years. I would like to bring to your attention a dire situation regarding my employment with SSA. I have included a number of you in this email because I believe you have the power to help make a positive change not only for myself, but other military spouses that currently carry out SSA's mission every single day.

Please understand that up until this point, I have followed the proper chain of command with my requests. I began with my District Manager [REDACTED], followed by my Area Director [REDACTED], then Deputy Regional Commissioner [REDACTED], and countless HR specialists. None of these individuals showed any interest in accommodating me. I understand that the First Lady's office has already engaged you regarding my situation, as well as Senator Rick Scott's office. I am once again reaching out to SSA for support.

To summarize, I am a military spouse to my amazing wife, Maj [REDACTED], USAF. We recently received orders to Japan and have made it here safely! We will spend at least the next 2 years here, living on the Air Force installation. I have absolutely loved working for SSA. If you look, you will notice my spotless record and nothing but outstanding performance reviews from all 6 Field Offices that I have worked in. I was 100% telework from March 2020 until May 2023. Despite this, my repeated attempts to have the agency accommodate me as a military spouse and caregiver have been denied. As a result, I have been forced to either go AWOL - or burn through all of my Annual Leave (which took me years to accumulate) until it expires this coming July, at which point I will no longer be an employee for SSA. The attached resignation letter, which was emailed to my District Manager back in May, summarizes my interactions with the agency and its lack of flexibility.

Also attached is a recent Executive Order (EO), which was signed by the President on June 9, 2023 (Advancing Economic Security for Military and Veteran Spouses, Military Caregivers, and Survivors). Among other things, this EO states that within the next 180 days, the Director of OPM shall develop and issue a Government-wide military spouse/caregivers hiring and retention strategic plan (Section 2a). The Director of OPM shall issue guidance to agencies to:

- Reinforce existing telework and remote work flexibility for military spouse/caregivers
- Encourage agencies to support administrative leave to military spouses during geographic relocation due to the service member's orders
- Encourage agencies to collaborate so that a military spouse/caregiver may be placed in another Federal agency position when arrangements to retain a military spouse/caregiver are unavailable (Section 4a)

Section 5 also requests that agencies retain their military spouse employees with the use of the Domestic Employees Teleworking Overseas (DETO) program. The DETO program is not new to the Federal Government. Many federal agencies already have policy and guidance for DETO. I understand SSA is one of the few remaining Federal Agencies that do not. I formally requested a DETO with SSA, but

was denied for this as well.

This EO builds upon the Government-wide plans required by EO 13583 of August 18, 2011 (Establishing a Coordinated Government-Wide Initiative to Promote Diversity and Inclusion in the Federal Workforce), and Executive Order 14035 of June 25, 2021 (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce (Section 2a)). With the recently signed EO, the President is once again asking for your help in supporting us military spouses. What will it take for SSA to finally take action?

Hopefully by now it is clear to you that I am fighting hard to keep my job. I didn't put in great work for this agency for the money. I did it because I LOVE the work, and I am READY to keep putting in that work, right now. I was meant to do this job until I retire. That being said, I understand it will take time for SSA to implement any new policy. Since the EO is giving Federal Agencies 180 days to comply, I am formally requesting to be placed on LWOP for 6 months effective June 18th 2023. My hopes are that SSA will consider revisiting any of my requests that were previously denied.

I thank you for taking the time to read this. Since I no longer have access to my SSA email, kindly respond here to my personal email.

Respectfully,

[REDACTED]

May 22nd 2023

Dear Mr. [REDACTED]

At your request, I am submitting this letter of resignation, but am doing so under protest. As you are aware, my wife who is Active-Duty military, has recently received overseas orders. As I mentioned before, we did not request this assignment. My wife was selected for it before we had the option to choose, and it was completely out of our control.

To summarize our exchanges since receiving these orders:

My request dated May 8th, 2023, which included a request to continue teleworking for Social Security and/or receive Leave Without Pay (LWOP) during our transition overseas, was denied on May 9th, 2023. You stated that the Agency does not engage in international hardship transfers due to security concerns, and that there is no entitlement to LWOP for my situation. I respectfully disagreed with the agency's interpretation of this policy.

I also requested FMLA on May 10th, 2023 but was also denied on May 18th, 2023. You stated that the orders do not reflect a call to covered active duty. I also respectfully disagreed with the agency's interpretation of this policy.

Without this resignation letter, you have informed me that I would be placed on Absent Without Leave (AWOL) status. I expressed that it was never my intention to separate from the agency this way. Since I am being forced to resign, you advised me that my remaining Annual Leave will be either paid out in a lump sum or used over time until it is exhausted. My request to use this leave until it is exhausted was submitted on May 19th, 2023, and it has been approved today. Again, I am very grateful that you have allowed me to take this option.

I believe we have both calculated and agreed that my final date of employment with SSA will be on July 11th, 2023, at 10:15am. This is the moment my Annual Leave will be exhausted. If I am to be hired for

another GS position overseas before this date, I will inform the agency as soon as possible of my new official resignation date, so I can transfer any remaining leave over to my new position. After almost 9 years with SSA, I am sad to be forced to part ways from a position that I loved and excelled at. It is unfortunate that the agency was not able to accommodate me despite its staffing shortages. It is my understanding that I am leaving in good terms with you and the agency and am therefore eligible for Reinstatement when we return home from overseas. Thank you for your time and for always remaining professional despite our disagreements. I wish you the best of luck, perhaps we will work together again sometime.

Thank you,

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