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New Bill Gives BOP Direct-Hire Authority to Expedite Hiring

December 11, 2023

Categories: [BOP \(https://www.afge.org/articles/?Category=40\)](https://www.afge.org/articles/?Category=40), [The Insider \(https://www.afge.org/articles/?Category=84\)](https://www.afge.org/articles/?Category=84)

A new piece of legislation has been introduced to speed up the hiring process at the severely understaffed Bureau of Prisons (BOP) by granting the agency direct-hire authority.

With strong support from the AFGE Council of Prison Locals, the **BOP Direct-Hire Authority Act** (https://grothman.house.gov/uploadedfiles/bop_direct-hire_authority_act_text.pdf) has been introduced to provide direct-hire authority for all BOP facilities until each of them reaches a 96% staffing level.

The bipartisan bill was **introduced** (<https://grothman.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=3752>) by Reps. Glenn Grothman, R-Wisc. and Matt Cartwright, D-Pa. It currently has 11 co-sponsors.

Staffing at BOP has gone down from 43,369 employees in January 2016 to 35,000 employees in September 2022. It takes at least 105 days and even up to six months for BOP facilities to hire new employees as applicants must be processed through the Office of Personnel Management.

“The current staffing levels in BOP institutions have reached dangerously low levels, posing significant risks to both staff and inmates,” said AFGE Council of Prison Locals President Brandy Moore White. “Insufficient staffing within the Bureau of Prisons has far-reaching consequences, affecting prison operations, inmate management, and overall institutional functioning,”

“In fact, in FY2023, there were over 7,700 vacancies for correctional officers within the BOP. We firmly believe that the enactment of the “BOP Direct-Hire Authority Act” into law will play a vital role in ensuring the safety and security of our prison facilities,” she added.

Chronic understaffing has led to an unprecedented exodus of workers, effectively wiping out all the record hiring efforts of mid-2021. Requiring employees who normally work as cooks, nurses, and teachers to perform the duties of correctional officers – known as augmentation – was initially justified so that BOP wouldn’t have to hire new staff for a week or so while officers were out doing training, but the agency has abused the practice due to staffing cuts.

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