

## Letter Writing Campaign

Bill Freeman, FEA-Europe General Counsel, Coordinator

My goal is to force DoDEA to fix a pay system that has been hopelessly broken for two decades. Seventeen years ago, FEA felt compelled to retain me to arbitrate pay grievances. This was never meant to be a long term arrangement. Paying for an attorney with my expertise has been incredibly expensive. For 17 years, DoDEA has left it to me to fix their pay problems one by one. DoDEA has obviously decided it is cheaper to pay for my services than to spend many millions of dollars in hiring scores of additional competent personnel and holding them accountable. My goal is to force DoDEA to do their jobs. My goal is to make my job unnecessary, so I can rest in peace. FEA has tried everything else...picketing, IG Complaints, countless grievances, and countless class action arbitration awards. The wheels of justice grind very slowly. DoDEA knows that, and slowing those wheels down seems to be their only goal. I simply cannot force DoDEA to fix this system through the legal process alone. The time has come for political pressure too. The time has come for everyone in FEA to stand as a Union.

### Instructions

**DO NOT CONTACT OR RESPOND TO ANY MEDIA OR PRESS**, if you are a current employee. You are not authorized to do so, and it could lead to disciplinary action.

Please write your two Senators (see [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov)), your Congressman (see [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov)), the Secretary of Defense, the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) (for all DoD addresses use 1400 Defense Pentagon, Washington, DC 20301-1400), the Director of DoDEA (Thomas.Brady@hq.dodea.edu) and anyone else you care to write, except the media.

**DO NOT USE a government computer, DoDEA OUTLOOK, or do this from school.**

We are not going to provide a template. Use your own words. It will mean so much more. This is your chance to tell your story. Provide the facts as you know them. It is not important that you are 100 percent correct. No one expects you to know everything about your case. In fact, your lack of knowledge in these matters is one of the main points we are trying to drive home. It is DoDEA's responsibility to convey that knowledge to you, and they have failed miserably. I believe they actually try to hide their gross incompetence behind this veil of secrecy and their

stonewalling. Please copy me at [Bfreeman@nea.org](mailto:Bfreeman@nea.org). Please do not ask me any questions about this. The time I spend answering your questions will take away from the time I can spend in litigation.

## General Facts

-600 are waiting to be paid in accordance with Pay and Violation of Debt Collection Act Grievances. Some have been waiting as long as seven years.

-300 are waiting to be paid in accordance with the MA+ Case. Most have been waiting for almost four years since FEA won the Sands Award, establishing their right to payment. It has been two years since FEA won the Brent Award, forcing DoDDS to comply. In those two years, DoDEA has paid 39 teachers in full. These payments are averaging \$30,000 each. There are 300 in the case. At this rate, it will take 14 more years to pay all. One retiree has already died waiting for a \$30,000 payment.

-Arbitrator Brent said it best in 2003: “The agency has been unable or unwilling to cure persistent and pervasive systemic defects in its accounting and payroll systems despite multiple prior grievances submitted by individual employees that have been vigorously prosecuted by the Association.” “Employees are routinely provided with payments without meaningful explanation of how the payments were derived, thus leaving the employee **adrift on a sea of uncertainty.**” As such, DoDEA is ordered to provide “a clear, fully understandable explanation of what is included in each pay check,” also referred to as the SMART LES. Twelve years later, DoDEA is still refusing to comply. FEA has now filed a ULP, seeking enforcement proceedings in Federal Court.

-For the last 17 years, there has been **one person** in DoDEA who has any expertise in pay. She worked on the DFAS DoDEA pay team, and then transferred to DoDEA Headquarters. She alone has been the lynchpin for every pay problem in DoDEA ever since. Because of the incompetence at DLA and DFAS, she must check everything they do in response to every single Pay Grievance. She simply cannot do this alone. DoDEA needs to hire 10 more just like her. We need to do everything in our power to get her the help she needs.

-The real problem with this pay system has always been **DoDEA Leadership**. It is their responsibility to assign sufficient resources to fix this system. It is their

responsibility to hire, train, and sufficiently pay enough qualified personnel at DoDEA HQ, DLA, and DFAS. It is their responsibility to hold them accountable. It is their responsibility to implement the SMART LES, something that would help tremendously. It would enable teachers and DoDEA to discover and try to fix pay problems quickly. Why DoDEA has refused to do so is baffling, unless they are trying to hide behind the mystery pay. It is DoDEA Leadership's responsibility to hire, train and sufficiently pay additional personnel at the District and Area Headquarters too. DoDEA Leadership has designated each school's secretary as that school's point of contact for pay problems. It is DoDEA Leadership's responsibility to hire better qualified personnel, train, and pay them commensurately. DoDEA has obviously decided it is cheaper to pay litigation costs than pay the money to fix the system.

-DLA and DFAS are not the biggest problem. Do not let anyone tell you different. 99 percent of all pay problems start with DoDEA. It is the secretaries and DoDEA HQ who tell DLA whom to process. DFAS does only what DoDEA and DLA direct them to do. DFAS is the bank. They only pay checks that DoDEA and DLA write.