## IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA

:

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES LOCAL 2018, AMERICAN FEDERATION OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES COUNCIL OF PRISON LOCALS 33	: : :
Plaintiffs, v.	:
KIRAN AHUJA IN HER OFFICIAL CAPACITY AS DIRECTOR OF THE UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT; MERRICK GARLAND IN HIS OFFICIAL CAPACITY AS ATTORNEY GENERAL; LLOYD AUSTIN IN HIS OFFCIAL CAPACITY AS SECRETARY OF DEFENSE; JOSEPH R. BIDEN IN HIS OFFICIAL CAPACITY AS PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA	: CASE NO. 2:21-cv-05172 :
	: : : :

## **COMPLAINT**

The Plaintiffs, by their counsel van der Veen, Hartshorn, and Levin, through Bruce L. Castor, Jr. are seeking damages against State actors for committing acts, under color of law, which deprived Plaintiffs of rights secured by the First and Fourteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution, the laws of the United States, and the Civil Services Reform Act of 1978; arising out of Defendants' engaging in constitutional violations that stemming out of the COVID-19 Mandate issued Office of Personnel Management following an executive order from Joseph R. Biden, President of the United States.

#### Case 2:21-cv-05172-HB Document 1 Filed 11/23/21 Page 2 of 10

This civil action results from the Defendants' flagrant disregard for the constitutional and labor rights of American citizens as Defendants attempt to compel vaccinations of Plaintiffs' members against the members' will. This OPM mandate presents an unprecedented assertion of federal authority in an attempt to coerce over 80 million Americans to unwillingly inject the COVID-19 vaccine into their bodies on pain of losing their jobs. To be clear, Defendants seek by coercion workers ingest into their bodies a foreign substance by needles stabbed through their skin on multiple occasions on pain of depriving these workers of their livelihood creating financial insecurity to countless American families. No matter what the justification, Plaintiffs contend a more egregious invasion of the sanctity of the personal freedoms of American citizens by their government is unimaginable. The actions taken by OPM threatening the livelihoods and financial security of the Plaintiffs' members is done with a flagrant disregard for the constitutional and labor rights of American citizens. Through the actions of Defendants' and other non-party individuals and entities, vaccines have been politicized to a point where receiving or declining a vaccine has become a political act in the eyes of the public and being compelled into discussing one's vaccine status is tantamount to compelling that person to engage in political speech against that individual's will.

By forcing its employees to disclose their vaccine status, OSHA grants employers and federal contractors the authority to compel political speech in violation of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. By requiring workers across America to disclose their vaccination status, Defendants Kiran Ahuja and Joseph R. Biden are forcing them to engage in un-sought-out, and individually undesirable, political speech in violation of the First Amendment.

#### Case 2:21-cv-05172-HB Document 1 Filed 11/23/21 Page 3 of 10

Additionally, the OPM mandate disregards the rights of unionized employees as outlined and protected in the Civil Service Reform Act in which all changes to terms and conditions of employees must be bargained in good faith. OPM ignored the duty Plaintiffs have to their members to bargain in good faith about safety practices, since a unilateral change in terms and conditions without bargaining is a blatant *prima facie* indication of bad faith. In addition, retaliation against complaints or concerns about safety is prohibited by law, yet the OPM mandate has invited employers to terminate employees without the option of weekly testing and masks. In sum, Plaintiffs ask this Court to review the OPM mandate because it violates the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States, the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 and the unalienable natural rights of freedom of expression and religion of Plaintiffs members.

#### **JURISDICTION**

1. This Court has jurisdiction over this matter pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1331 (federal question jurisdiction).

This Court is authorized to grant declaratory judgment under the Declaratory
 Judgment Act, 28 U.S.C. §§ 2201-02, implemented through Rule 57 of the Federal Rules of Civil
 Procedure.

3. This Court is authorized to grant Plaintiffs' prayer for temporary, preliminary, and permanent injunctive relief pursuant to Rule 65 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure.

#### PARTIES

4. Plaintiffs are the American Federation of Government Employees Local 2018 and the Council of Prison Locals 33 (hereinafter referred to as "Plaintiffs").

#### Case 2:21-cv-05172-HB Document 1 Filed 11/23/21 Page 4 of 10

5. Defendant Kiran Ahuja (hereinafter referred to as "Ahuja"), is the Director of the United States Office of Personnel Management (OPM).

6. Defendant President Joseph R. Biden (hereinafter referred to as "President Biden") is the President of the United States.

7. Defendant Merrick Garland (hereinafter referred to as "Garland") is the United States Attorney General.

8. Defendant Lloyd Austin (hereinafter referred to as "Austin") is the United States Secretary of Defense.

9. Plaintiffs are government employees and union members who have chosen, for various reasons, to refuse vaccination, or have refused to disclose their COVID-19 vaccination status to others, and OPM seeks to coerce Plaintiffs to engage in political speech in compelling such disclosure by threat to their livelihoods, and to the well-being and fiscal security of persons dependent on Plaintiffs' jobs for their literal survival.

10. Members of Plaintiffs have sincere, bona fide beliefs in opposition to the vaccine which are religious, quasi-religious, or personal in nature, including privacy rights of individual American citizens to decide for themselves how their own bodies are to be treated by government actors.

11. All Plaintiffs are employed by the federal government and are covered by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, which mandates the reasonable accommodation of sincere religious beliefs.

12. Plaintiffs are due bargaining in good faith with their employers due to their union membership, which cannot be obviated by an unprecedented and misplaced assertion of federal authority.

#### STATEMENT OF FACTS

#### Case 2:21-cv-05172-HB Document 1 Filed 11/23/21 Page 5 of 10

13. On September 9, 2021, President Biden issued Executive Order 14043 (EO 14043) requiring vaccination against COVID-19 for all federal employees.

14. Subsequently, on October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021, OPM issued a set of guidelines designed to enforce EO 14043.

15. The OPM guidelines require federal agencies (including those led by Garland and Austin) to require employees be vaccinated before November 22, 2021.

16. As federal employees, Plaintiffs have faced a campaign of harassment, embarrassment, and shaming due to their vaccination status. Despite union membership and protections, these workers were never given the opportunity to negotiate these newly mandated practices in good faith, and many have faced punishments through termination of contracts or employment.

17. Such disciplinary action is arbitrary, is not easily appealed, and is not narrowly tailored to fulfilling the goals of ending the COVID-19 pandemic.

18. Defendants chose the most invasive and dangerous action to address the pandemic instead of, for example, the far less invasive requirement of masking with periodic testing, *out of which workers could choose to opt if they were vaccinated.* 

### COUNT I COMPULSION OF POLITICAL SPEECH

19. Plaintiffs incorporate by reference the preceding paragraphs as though the same were set forth at length herein.

20. The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution enshrines the right to free speech for all American citizens.

#### Case 2:21-cv-05172-HB Document 1 Filed 11/23/21 Page 6 of 10

21. The U.S. Supreme Court has long held that the right to free speech protects against state actors compelling others to express speech, or act in a manner that is fundamentally political in nature.

22. The determination of whether an act or a statement is "political" in nature is dependent on how society at large views such act or statement.

23. Because of such dependence, what a society defines as "political" changes as collective mores and sensitivities shift. Therefore, the list of acts and statements society considers "political" is not cast in stone, but ever-changing during the life of the Republic.

24. It is entirely possible, for example, that a previously considered "political act" or "political statement," over time, can lose that political meaning. Conversely, it is possible for a previously apolitical act or statement to become controversial enough, and partisan enough, to acquire a previously unconsidered political meaning.

25. Disclosing one's status as not vaccinated against the COVID-19 has become politicized in such a way that the expressing of one's opposition has acquired a political meaning: bringing public derision down upon the individual or, in fewer instances, garnering public acclaim for the individual, depending on the political beliefs of the public toward coerced governmental action against its citizens.

26. The keenly political nature of the COVID-19 vaccine can be proven objectively by showing the correlation between COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy and political party affiliation, and subjectively by showing published and reported political commentary acknowledging the partisan nature of the act of vaccination and attitude toward forced vaccination.

27. Because of the act itself has become politically so intensely toxic in nature, refusing to disclose one's COVID-19 vaccination status carries the weight and social effect of partisan

#### Case 2:21-cv-05172-HB Document 1 Filed 11/23/21 Page 7 of 10

political speech especially because refusing to take the vaccine creates a political social stigma against the declarant. American citizens should not be compelled to make such statements with such effect, and this Honorable Court ought to treat politically charged speech as constitutionally protected speech that government actors may not compel.

28. Defendants violated the First Amendment of the United States Constitution when they compelled Plaintiffs' members to engage in the fundamentally political act of showing proof of COVID-19 vaccination as a pre-requisite for further employment or requiring Plaintiff to disclose a member's unvaccinated status, having the inevitable effect to publicly stigmatize such members by equating such a position with political "rightwing extremists," or worse.

29. If the member's objection is religious or due to medical risk or invasion of privacy, the mandate seeks to require Plaintiff members to make political statements against their will, and potentially against their moral beliefs, their right to privacy in their bodies, and their physical well-being, thereby subjecting them to public ridicule and contempt simply for invoking one or more of the constitutional rights all Americans are, supposedly, permitted to enjoy without government interference, governmental backlash or risk of financial ruin at the hands of the very government whose powers the Constitution seeks to limit.

30. By advancing plans and encouraging federal agencies to require employees to disclose their COVID-19 vaccination status, Defendants conspired with one another to violate the First Amendment rights of Plaintiffs' members.

## COUNT II <u>VIOLATION OF THE FREE EXERCISE CLAUSE OF THE FIRST AMENDMENT TO</u> <u>THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION</u>

31. Plaintiff incorporates by reference the preceding paragraphs as though the same were set forth at length herein.

#### Case 2:21-cv-05172-HB Document 1 Filed 11/23/21 Page 8 of 10

32. The Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution prohibits the State from abridging Plaintiffs' members right to the free exercise of religion.

33. President Biden and OPM have a constitutional duty to grant reasonable religious exemptions to all federal employees who hold an honest, deeply held belief in opposition to COVID-19 vaccinations.

34. Various federal agencies had policies and procedures in place to review religious exemptions for other matters, including vaccines, but many agencies, as instructed by OPM have chosen instead to require new and far more restrictive applications for the COVID-19 vaccine relative to other vaccines, further demonstrating that President Biden and OPM are willing participants in the state's over-reaching infringement of the constitutional rights of its citizens.

35. Various federal agencies have made multiple formal statements to employees demonstrating that the COVID-19 "new" system for approving or denying religious exemptions to vaccination is arbitrary and could result in employees who previously held a religious exemption relative to other vaccines to be denied in the instance of the COVID-19 vaccine.

36. Federal agencies arbitrarily denied religious exemption applications from Plaintiffs' members, despite the fact that the members applying held longstanding, deeply felt and held religious beliefs in opposition to vaccination for COVID-19.

37. Defendants allowed and encouraged federal agencies to decide whether or not an employee holds a bona fide, deeply held religious belief in opposition to the COVID-19 vaccine, despite said agencies being unqualified by any objective measure to make such a determination. This assertion of power oversteps the authority of unions engaged in collective bargaining working within federal organizations.

38. Defendants thus violated the religious freedoms of Plaintiffs' members guaranteed to

them by the free exercise of religion clause of the First Amendment.

39. By encouraging federal agencies to require vaccination without allowing for any religious exemption, Defendants conspired to violate the First Amendment rights of Plaintiff's members.

## COUNT III <u>VIOLATION OF THE RIGHTS TO PRIVACY AND BODY AUTONOMY FOUND IN</u> <u>THE FOURTEENTH AMENDMENT TO THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION</u>

40. Plaintiff incorporates by reference the preceding paragraphs as though the same were set forth at length herein.

41. The United States Supreme Court has long recognized a right to privacy and body autonomy written into the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

42. As state actors, the Defendants are limited by each constitutional right under the U.S. Constitution as interpreted by the United States Supreme Court, and thus hold a constitutional duty to not violate Plaintiffs' members' rights to privacy and body autonomy.

43. By compelling federal agencies to require vaccinations for employees under the threat of terminated contracts or financial penalties, President Biden violated the Fourteenth

Amendment rights of Plaintiff's members.

44. By planning to compel employees to vaccinate under the threat of dismissal, OPM has conspired and continues to conspire to violate the Fourteenth Amendment rights of Plaintiffs' members to be free from unreasonable governmental intrusion into their bodies, and governmental interference into how each individual chooses to treat their own body.

## COUNT IV UNFAIR LABOR PRACTICES

45. Plaintiffs incorporate by reference the preceding paragraphs as though the same were set forth at length herein.

#### Case 2:21-cv-05172-HB Document 1 Filed 11/23/21 Page 10 of 10

46. The Civil Service Reform Act explicitly considers "refusing to consult or negotiate with a labor organization" to be an "unfair labor practice." 5 U.S.C. 7116(a)(5).

47. By ordering and encouraging federal agencies to unilaterally change the conditions of employment of union members without consulting or bargaining with labor organizations, Defendants have violated the Civil Service Reform Act.

48. Defendants arbitrary and discriminatory behavior in flagrant violation of U.S. Labor law has caused immediate and great psychological and monetary harm to members of Plaintiffs requiring the power of this Honorable Court to swiftly remedy.

#### PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff respectfully requests that this Honorable Court enter

Judgment in their favor and against Defendants and award Plaintiff the following relief:

- An Order enjoining OPM and President Biden from enforcing EO 14403.
- b. Award members of Plaintiff compensatory damages for their losses caused by Defendants' activities.
- c. Award Plaintiffs their costs and counsel fees; and
- d. Award any additional and further relief the Court deems appropriate.

#### VAN DER VEEN, HARTSHORN & LEVIN

DATE: 11/23/2021

BY: /s/ Bruce L. Castor Jr. Bruce L. Castor, Jr. Michael T. van der Veen Attorneys for Plaintiffs

JS 44 (Rev. 10/20)	Case 2:21-cv-05	172-HB Docu	ment 1-1 Filed 1	11/23/21 P	age 1 of 1		
JS 44 (Rev. 10/20) CIVIL COVER SHEET The JS 44 civil cover sheet and the information contained herein neither replace nor supplement the filing and service of pleadings or other papers as required by law, except as							
provided by local rules of court purpose of initiating the civil de	t. This form, approved by th	e Judicial Conference of	the United States in Septem				
I. (a) PLAINTIFFS			DEFENDA		1.2.6		
American Federation of Locals 33, American F						nagement Director	
2018	ederation of Governin	tent Employees Loe	T KII GII T III GJ			ck Garland, Secretary	
(b) County of Residence of	of First Listed Plaintiff <u>S</u> XCEPT IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CA	t. Francis County, AR	—— America Jo	seph R. Biden	1	f the United States of	
(c) Attorneys (Firm Name, .		/	County of Resid	dence of First Liste	d Defendant <u>I</u> AINTIFF CASES O	District of Columbia	
Bruce L. Castor Jr., va		1 & Levin	NOTE: IN LAN	ND CONDEMNATIO	N CASES, USE TH		
1219 Spruce Street, Ph				RACT OF LAND IN	/OLVED.		
(215) 546-1000 ext. 21	10		Attomeys (If Kr	nown)			
II. BASIS OF JURISDI	CTION (Place an "X" in (	One Box Only)			L PARTIES	(Place an "X" in One Box for Plaintiff	
1 U.S. Government	3 Federal Question		(For Diversity Cases)	Only) PTF DEF	a	and One Box for Defendant) PTF DEF	
Plaintiff	(U.S. Government i	Not a Party)	Citizen of This State		Incorporated or Pri of Business In T	incipal Place 🔀 4 🔀 4	
2 U.S. Government Defendant	4 Diversity (Indicate Citizenshi	ip of Parties in Item III)	Citizen of Another State	2 2 2	Incorporated and P of Business In A		
			Citizen or Subject of a Foreign Country	3 3	Foreign Nation	6 6	
IV. NATURE OF SUIT			. c.e.gn country	Click here f	for: Nature of S	uit Code Descriptions.	
CONTRACT		RTS	FORFEITURE/PENAL		KRUPTCY	OTHER STATUTES	
110 Insurance 120 Marine	PERSONAL INJURY 310 Airplane	PERSONAL INJURY 365 Personal Injury -	625 Drug Related Seizur of Property 21 USC	B	al 28 USC 158 drawal	375 False Claims Act 376 Qui Tam (31 USC	
130 Miller Act 140 Negotiable Instrument	315 Airplane Product Liability	Product Liability	690 Other	B	SC 157	3729(a))	
150 Recovery of Overpayment	320 Assault, Libel &	367 Health Care/ Pharmaceutical		PROPER	TY RIGHTS	400 State Reapportionment 410 Antitrust	
& Enforcement of Judgment	Slander 330 Federal Employers	Personal Injury		820 Copy		430 Banks and Banking	
152 Recovery of Defaulted	Liability	Product Liability 368 Asbestos Personal		830 Paten 835 Paten	it - Abbreviated	450 Commerce 460 Deportation	
Student Loans (Excludes Veterans)	340 Marine 345 Marine Product	Injury Product Liability		New	Drug Application	470 Racketeer Influenced and	
153 Recovery of Overpayment	Liability	PERSONAL PROPERT	LABOR		nd Trade Secrets	Corrupt Organizations 480 Consumer Credit	
of Veteran's Benefits	350 Motor Vehicle	370 Other Fraud	710 Fair Labor Standard	s Act o	f 2016	(15 USC 1681 or 1692)	
160 Stockholders' Suits 190 Other Contract	355 Motor Vehicle Product Liability	371 Truth in Lending 380 Other Personal	Act 720 Labor/Management	SOCIAL	SECURITY	485 Telephone Consumer Protection Act	
195 Contract Product Liability	360 Other Personal	Property Damage	Relations	861 HIA	(1395ff)	490 Cable/Sat TV	
196 Franchise	Injury 362 Personal Injury -	385 Property Damage Product Liability	740 Railway Labor Act 751 Family and Medical	862 Black	c Lung (923) C/DIWW (405(g))	850 Securities/Commodities/ Exchange	
REAL PROPERTY	Medical Malpractice		Leave Act	864 SSID	Title XVI	890 Other Statutory Actions	
210 Land Condemnation	CIVIL RIGHTS X 440 Other Civil Rights	PRISONER PETITIONS Habeas Corpus:	790 Other Labor Litigation 791 Employee Retirement		405(g))	891 Agricultural Acts 893 Environmental Matters	
220 Foreclosure	441 Voting	463 Alien Detainee	Income Security Act	t FEDERA	L TAX SUITS	895 Freedom of Information	
230 Rent Lease & Ejectment 240 Torts to Land	442 Employment 443 Housing/	510 Motions to Vacate Sentence	:		s (U.S. Plaintiff efendant)	Act 896 Arbitration	
245 Tort Product Liability	Accommodations	530 General		🔲 871 IRS—	-Third Party	899 Administrative Procedure	
290 All Other Real Property	445 Amer. w/Disabilities - Employment	535 Death Penalty Other:	IMMIGRATION 462 Naturalization Appli	the second se	JSC 7609	Act/Review or Appeal of	
	446 Amer, w/Disabilities -	540 Mandamus & Other	465 Other Immigration			Agency Decision 950 Constitutionality of	
	Other 448 Education	550 Civil Rights 555 Prison Condition	Actions			State Statutes	
		560 Civil Detainee -					
		Conditions of Confinement					
V. ORIGIN (Place an "X" in		5 5 875/	-				
		Remanded from Appellate Court	Reopened A	ransferred from [ nother District pecify]	6 Multidistri Litigation Transfer		
			filing (Do not cite jurisdiction			Direct The	
VI. CAUSE OF ACTIO		tion, Civil Services Refo					
VI. CAUSE OF ACTIC	Brief description of cal	use: constitutional violation	ons of OPM issued COVID-	-19 Mandate			
VII. REQUESTED IN	CHECK IF THIS	IS A CLASS ACTION	DEMAND \$	CH	IECK YES only	if demanded in complaint:	
COMPLAINT:	UNDER RULE 2	3, F.R.Cv.P.		JU	RY DEMAND:	Yes No	
VIII. RELATED CASH IF ANY	(See instructions)		11.	DOCKE	TNUMPED		
JODGEDOCKET NUMBER							
DATE SIGNATURE OF ATTORNEY OF RECORD							
FOR OFFICE USE ONLY							
	MOUNT	APPLYING IFP	JUDO	GE	MAG JUD	DGE	

## Case 2:21-cv-05172-HB Document 1-2 Filed 11/23/21 Page 1 of 1 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA

**DESIGNATION FORM** 

(to be used by counsel or pro se plaintiff to indicate the category of the case for the purpose of assignment to the appropriate calendar)

Address of Plaintiff:

# 220 Cleveland Ave. Forrest City, AR 72335

Address of Defendant: 1900 E Street, NW, Washington, DC 20415-1000

Place of Accident, Incident or Transaction:

Washington, DC

RELATED CASE, IF ANY:						
Case	Number: Juo	dge:	Date Terr	ninated:		
Civil	cases are deemed related when Yes is answered to an	y of the following questions:				
	Is this case related to property included in an earlier numbered suit pending or within one year previously terminated action in this court?			No		
	2. Does this case involve the same issue of fact or grow out of the same transaction as a prior suit pending or within one year previously terminated action in this court?			No 🖌		
	Does this case involve the validity or infringement of numbered case pending or within one year previously		No 🖌			
4. I	is this case a second or successive habeas corpus, soc case filed by the same individual?	ial security appeal, or pro se civ	ril rights Yes	No 🖌		
this c	ify that, to my knowledge, the within case $\Box$ is / [ourt except as noted above. $\frac{11/23}{2021}$	in not related to any case not     Multisign here     Multisign here     Multisign here	Mr_	vear previously terminated action in 46370 Attorney I.D. # (if applicable)		
CIVII	L: (Place a √ in one category only)	V				
	<ul> <li>Federal Question Cases:</li> <li>Indemnity Contract, Marine Contract, and All O</li> <li>FELA</li> <li>Jones Act-Personal Injury</li> <li>Antitrust</li> <li>Patent</li> <li>Labor-Management Relations</li> <li>Civil Rights</li> <li>Habeas Corpus</li> <li>Securities Act(s) Cases</li> <li>Social Security Review Cases</li> <li>All other Federal Question Cases (Please specify):</li> </ul>	ther Contracts       1.       In         2.       A         3.       A         4.       M         5.       M         6.       C         7.       P         8.       P         9.       A         (A)	Products Liability Products Liability – Asbest All other Diversity Cases	ury se specify):		
ARBITRATION CERTIFICATION						
In the effect of this certification is to remove the case from eligibility for arbitration.)         In the effect of this certification is to remove the case from eligibility for arbitration.)         In the effect of this certification is to remove the case from eligibility for arbitration.)         In the effect of this certification is to remove the case from eligibility for arbitration.)         In the effect of this certification is to remove the case from eligibility for arbitration.)         In the effect of this certification is to remove the case from eligibility for arbitration.)         In the effect of the						
DATE	11/23/2021	No Asign breitapplicable	In.	46370		
Attorney-at-Law / Pro Se Plaintiff       Attorney I.D. # (if applicable)         NOTE: A trial de novo will be a trial by jury only if there has been compliance with F.R.C.P. 38.       Attorney I.D. # (if applicable)						