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COMMITTEES:  
AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION,  
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BANKING, HOUSING,  
AND URBAN AFFAIRS

FINANCE

VETERANS' AFFAIRS

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510 - 3505

May 7, 2018

Timothy Sloan  
Chief Executive Officer  
Wells Fargo & Co.  
420 Montgomery Street  
San Francisco, CA 94104

Dear Mr. Sloan:

I write to express my concerns about the continued layoffs of American workers and outsourcing of U.S. jobs by the bank you manage. Though banks are among the biggest winners from the recent partisan tax bill and ongoing unraveling of financial protections, firms like yours continue to view workers as just another cost to be cut to further juice profits. Meanwhile, executives and shareholders are enjoying record compensation packages and stock buybacks. I, therefore, write to request that your bank produce a public plan to invest a far greater share of your company's resources in American jobs.

As noted in a recent report by the Communications Workers of America and the Committee for Better Banks,<sup>1</sup> banks have continued to slash jobs in America and also move and keep jobs overseas. Although changes to bank employee levels have not been uniform, overall, the nation's largest banks have cut at least 8,000 jobs over the second half of 2017, including many in the call center and customer service industry.<sup>2</sup> In many cases, these layoffs of American workers come as banks are outsourcing work to overseas facilities.

Your bank is no exception. Wells Fargo announced earlier this year that it would close 900 branches,<sup>3</sup> which follows a 2017 decision to close a Lehigh Valley, Pennsylvania call center and eliminate 460 jobs.<sup>4</sup> The branch closures notice came after an announcement that your bank was building a second call center in the Philippines that would seat more than 7,000 workers.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Communications Workers of America and Committee for Better Banks. "Tax Bill's Big Bank Beneficiaries Offshoring American Call Center Jobs." March 2018. Available at: <https://www.cwa-union.org/sites/default/files/20180306-cwa-cbb-bank-offshoring-report.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Scheer, David. "Big U.S. Banks Slashed 8,000 More Jobs Before Tax-Cut Windfall." *Bloomberg*, January 18, 2018. Available at: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-01-18/big-u-s-banks-slashed-8-000-more-jobs-before-tax-cut-windfall>

<sup>3</sup> Gray, Alistair. "Wells Fargo plans to close 900 branches despite \$3.4bn tax boost." *Financial Times*, January 12, 2018. Available at: <https://www.ft.com/content/e3fe9218-f79b-11e7-88f7-5465a6ce1a00>.

<sup>4</sup> Salamone, Anthony and Andrew Wagaman. "Wells Fargo Closing Lehigh Valley Call Center, Cutting 460 Jobs." *The Morning Call*, October 17, 2017. Available at: <http://www.mcall.com/business/mc-biz-wells-fargo-job-cuts-20171017-story.html>

<sup>5</sup> Wells Fargo. "Wells Fargo Opens New Recruitment Center Designed to Give Applicants the Look and Feel of a Typical Retail Bank Branch in the U.S." *Wells Fargo Press Release*, May 8, 2017. Available at: <https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20170508005563/en/Wells-Fargo-Opens-New-Recruitment-Center-Designed>

These job cuts and offshoring come at a time when banks are making record profits<sup>6</sup> and have just received a huge gift in the form of the partisan tax bill signed into law in December 2017.<sup>7</sup> In fact, banks as a sector are among the biggest winners from the tax bill.<sup>8</sup> Recent analysis examining the impact of the bill found that the six biggest banks, including yours, will save nearly \$14 billion in 2018 alone.<sup>9</sup> According to Goldman Sachs Investment Research, the partisan tax bill will reduce Wells Fargo's effective tax rate by 11 percentage points and increase the bank's net income by \$3.7 billion and earnings per share by 18 percent in 2018 alone.<sup>10</sup>

Instead of investing in your U.S. workforce, your bank seems to be using this golden age of profitability to further boost its stock price. In mid-2017, you announced planned stock buybacks of up to \$11.5 billion through mid-2018.<sup>11</sup> Since then, you have paid out an average of 80% of your quarterly earnings to shareholders.<sup>12</sup>

These payouts do little to help workers – either yours or others throughout the economy. Even when accounting for indirect ownership of stocks via 401(k) retirement plans or similar investment vehicles, only around half of American households own any shares of public companies.<sup>13</sup> For those who do own shares, ownership is highly concentrated among the wealthiest households. The richest 10 percent of households in the U.S. controlled 84 percent of all stocks.<sup>14</sup> One analysis estimates that only 6 percent of the corporate tax cut will go to workers, while 57 percent will go to shareholders.<sup>15</sup>

In addition to benefiting shareholders, using last year's compensation packages as an indicator, the proceeds from the tax cut will overwhelmingly go to big bank executives. You personally received a generous compensation boost in 2017, totaling 36 percent, even in the wake of

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<sup>6</sup> Egan, Matt. "Despite Record Profits, Banks Are Playing the Victim." *CNNMoney*, March 15, 2018. Available at: <http://money.cnn.com/2018/03/15/investing/bank-profits-senate-banking-bill/index.html>

<sup>7</sup> See Tankersley, Jim. "Banks Are Big Winners from Tax Cut." *New York Times*, January 16, 2018. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/16/us/politics/banks-are-big-winners-from-tax-cut.html>; and "Banks, Healthcare Service Firms Among Winners From U.S. Tax Bill." *Fox Business*, December 19, 2017. Available at: <https://www.foxbusiness.com/markets/banks-healthcare-service-firms-among-winners-from-u-s-tax-bill>

<sup>8</sup> Id

<sup>9</sup> Ramsden, Richard, James Yaro and Sal Saroni. "Corporate Tax Reform Impact on Large Banks Expected to be Positive." *Goldman Sachs Equity Research Report*, December 18, 2017. Goldman Sachs did not include itself in this analysis, but estimates indicate a savings of approximately \$1.06 billion next year based on 2016 revenue. See Baird, Addy. "How the White House and Wells Fargo Are Trying to Manipulate You, In One Chart." *ThinkProgress*, December 21, 2017. Available at: <https://thinkprogress.org/goldman-report-tax-plan-759ec84f8eee/>. This includes the impact of certain one-time charges accrued due to the tax bill, and also includes changes to the deductibility of Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation payments.

<sup>10</sup> Ramsden, Richard, James Yaro and Sal Saroni. "Corporate Tax Reform Impact on Large Banks Expected to be Positive." *Goldman Sachs Equity Research Report*, December 18, 2017.

<sup>11</sup> "Wells Fargo (WFC) to Increase Quarterly Dividend to \$0.39, Includes \$11.5B Buyback," *StreetInsider*, June 28, 2017. Available at: <https://www.streetinsider.com/Corporate+News/Wells+Fargo+%28WFC%29+to+Increase+Quarterly+Dividend+to+%240.39%2C+Includes+%2411.5B+Buyback/13054881.html>

<sup>12</sup> Average of net payout ratios reported by Wells Fargo in its three most recent quarterly earnings releases.

<sup>13</sup> Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System. "Changes in U.S. Family Finances from 2013 to 2016: Evidence from the Survey of Consumer Finances." *Federal Reserve vol. 103, no. 3*, September 2017. Available at: <https://www.federalreserve.gov/publications/files/scf17.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> Wolff, Edward N. "Household Wealth Trends in the United States, 1962 to 2016: Has Middle Class Wealth Recovered?" *National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper 24085*, November 2017. Available at: <http://www.nber.org/papers/w24085.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> JUST Capital, "The JUST Capital Rankings on Corporate Tax Reform." February 28, 2018. Available at: <https://justcapital.com/news/tax-reform-rankings/>



widespread consumer abuses,<sup>16</sup> and your recently released CEO to worker pay ratio was 291 to 1.

Your investment in workers appears to be small compared to what you are paying yourself and your shareholders. Although your bank recently announced a \$1.50 pay raise for entry-level employees,<sup>17</sup> this number pales in comparison to the raise you personally received.<sup>18</sup> Assuming each employee works 1920 hours per year, she would receive an extra \$2,880 compared to the \$4.4 million raise you got. If those numbers are right, these workers would receive about 0.07% as much of a raise as you. Spread out over the 70,000 workers that you said would be affected, the raise would total a little over \$200 million, which is less than 1% of the \$22.6 billion in buybacks you recently announced.<sup>19</sup>

Furthermore, your bank stands to gain an additional short-term boost from a rolling back of protections established after the financial crisis. The Administration is, at your bank's urging, in the midst of a widespread undoing of financial rules, which will boost your short-term profits substantially. According to a recent Congressional Research Service analysis, your bank could benefit from a \$40.2 billion windfall that lets it operate on more borrowed money.<sup>20</sup> As noted in a research report from Morgan Stanley, "the financial industry [will] be the biggest beneficiary of Republican deregulation attempts."<sup>21</sup> However, this will inevitably come at the long-term expense of workers, consumers and investors when the next crisis hits.

As the above-referenced report documents, when times are good, American workers don't fully share in the benefits of your companies' profitability. And when times are bad, it's even worse. Eventually, the unraveling of financial protections for which banks advocate will contribute to another downturn in the economy, and your workers will be the first to suffer the consequences with layoffs and cuts to their pay, healthcare and retirement benefits.

In light of this imbalance and unfairness, I ask that you provide the public with detailed plans on how your company will reinvest in American workers and their communities.

Sincerely,



Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator

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<sup>16</sup> Egan, Matt. "Wells Fargo's CEO is Getting a 36% Raise After the Bank's Nightmare Year." *CNNMoney*, March 15, 2018. Available at: <http://money.cnn.com/2018/03/15/investing/wells-fargo-ceo-pay-tim-sloan/index.html>

<sup>17</sup> JPMorgan Chase & Co., Annual Report: 2017. Available at: <https://www.jpmorganchase.com/corporate/investor-relations/document/annualreport-2017.pdf>.

<sup>18</sup> Egan, *supra*.

<sup>19</sup> Domm, Patti, "Companies Buying Back Stock at Record Pace Since Trump Tax Bill May Aid Market's Comeback," *CNBC*, Feb. 15, 2018. Available at: <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/02/15/companies-buying-back-stock-at-record-pace-since-trump-tax-bill-may-aid-markets-comeback.html>

<sup>20</sup> Memorandum from Marc Labonte et al., Congressional Research Service, to the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs, "Potential Effects of Two Policy Changes on the SLR," Apr. 17, 2018. Available on Request.

<sup>21</sup> Franck, Thomas. "While Big Banks Have Failed, Wall Street Sees Opportunity in Trump's Massive Deregulation Movement." *CNBC*, August 5, 2017. Available at: <https://www.cnbc.com/2017/08/04/wall-street-sees-opportunity-in-trumps-massive-deregulation-movement.html>