

AFL-CIO

LEGISLATIVE ALERT

May 12, 2017

Dear Representative:

The AFL-CIO strongly urges you to reject H.R. 1461, the "Employees and Taxpayers Protection Act of 2017." This bill imposes undue restrictions on the ability of federal employee unions to represent adequately their members at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), as well as extends the probationary period for new employees, thereby limiting their due process rights. Both provisions amount to little more than union busting at the VA.

By imposing arbitrary caps on the percentage of time union officers can spend on representational duties on official time, and eliminating it entirely for many professions, H.R. 1461 would make it virtually impossible for federal employee unions to fulfill their statutory representational duties. Specifically, the bill prohibits anyone at the VA from being on official time for more than 50% of their time; those engaged in patient care are limited to 25% time; and official time is banned altogether for physicians, dentists, podiatrists, chiropractors and optometrists.

The legislation also interferes with the election of union leadership by limiting who can provide official representation of bargaining unit members. It severely restricts the ability of officials engaged in patient care to conduct the representational duties of a local officer—or bans them from these activities altogether, effectively prohibiting them from holding union office.

The bill further bans union representatives' formal communication with lawmakers while on official time, discouraging federal employees from discussing with lawmakers ways to improve the delivery of services to veterans. H.R. 1461 would muzzle the voices of union representatives, even though fostering communication with lawmakers is an important element of a union's representational responsibilities.

Finally, the bill permits union members at the VA to revoke their membership at any time, rather than annually as provided under current law. This provision has nothing to do with improving services to veterans, and everything to do with reducing membership and breaking the back of the union. Make no mistake: The intent of this bill is to destroy federal unions' ability to represent their members, thereby stifling the ability of workers to have an independent voice—a result that no supporter of basic workers' rights in the public or private sector should support.

American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations

815 16th St., N.W. • Washington, D.C. 20006 • 202-637-5000 • www.aflcio.org

RICHARD L. TRUMKA
PRESIDENT

ELIZABETH H. SHULER
SECRETARY-TREASURER

TEFERE GEBRE
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

While we do not object to the bill's requirement for an accurate tracking of the use of official time at the VA, we caution that a thorough analysis of any such tracking, including independent confirmation of its accuracy, is necessary before the determination of any changes to official time.

We urge you to vote against H.R. 1461.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William Samuel".

William Samuel, Director
Government Affairs Department

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