

United DoD Workers Coalition

Collectively representing the interests of the Nation's defense since 2001

September 13, 2017

Dear Senator,

The undersigned unions of the United DoD Workers Coalition (UDWC), representing hundreds of thousands of Department of Defense workers, is writing in opposition to three proposed amendments to the Fiscal Year 2018 (FY18) National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), HR 2810.

- Oppose Johnson Amendment 878, which is intended to stifle the legal use of official time for representational purposes, cynically replaces the word “official time” with a new name that is patently misleading & derogatory, and **retroactively** claws back the earned pensions of federal employees who had previously used official time. This legislation is not only unnecessary, it is a mean-spirited attack on rank and file workers. It is below the dignity of the Congress. As written, it also appears to be unconstitutional ex post facto legislation.
- Oppose Johnson Amendment 877, which seeks to account for the minimal cost of official time, while ignoring the metrics with respect to the huge benefits and efficiencies that result from the use of official time. As stated above, there are countless examples of where official time results in taxpayer savings, yet this amendment ignores this. Furthermore, government agencies are already required to report annually on the use of official time. While we all support transparency and accurate reporting, this is a one-sided amendment that ignores the reality of the efficiencies created by official time, will end up costing taxpayers more money, and creates needless redundancy.

The Johnson amendments seem to be more ideologically driven than being focused on good government. Some in Congress have unfortunately falsely equated the use of official time as union activity when nothing could be further from the truth. Official time is used only for representation purposes to represent all members of a collective bargaining unit, whether they pay dues or not. For example, official time is used for resolving problems/disputes before they become larger problems, resulting in a reduction of legal expenses. Official time also allows for unions and management to work in a collaborative environment, and engage with management in labor-management partnerships that seek to gain efficiencies in the delivery of services provided to taxpayers at significant savings.

Lastly, it is worth reminding lawmakers that official time is negotiated with management and full-time use is accorded only when both sides deem that it is beneficial for the government (e.g., it may be demonstrably more efficient and cost-effective to have one representative use full-time official time than to have two use 50% to accomplish the same work, and the best trade-off can only be determined at the local level). This is exactly why the use of official time has enjoyed such strong bipartisan support from both Republicans and Democrats for so many years.

- Oppose McCain-Reed Amendment 498, which seeks to set in motion a new wave of expensive base closings, adding immense DoD fiscal pressure under the Budget Control Act, at a time of global uncertainty on the Korean peninsula and other politically and militarily changed areas. The 2005 Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) round fell billions short of the projected savings while disrupting state and local economies already suffering from strained budgets. Another round of BRAC is unnecessary and unwise, and will again prove costly if initiated.

The McCain-Reed amendment seeks to save funds and use these savings to address defense readiness shortfalls, but the experience of the last round of base closings in 2005 shows that this is much more

difficult and complex than was originally projected. The 2005 Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) round was predicted to save over \$35 billion while incurring costs of \$21 billion. In reality, the *cost* of the closings and realignments was more than \$35 billion while the savings are now projected to be less than \$10 billion over twenty years. This is because the closing of a defense facility is an enormous economic disruption to a local community. Often there are serious environmental hazards that need to be cleaned up. Tax dollars to fund schools and other essential services like police and fire protection dry up. Displaced workers and communities need significant transition assistance for retraining and economic development. The McCain-Reed amendment offers to solve this financial problem by capping “implementation costs” at a mere \$5 billion and, thus, leaving highly distressed communities and working families without the vital assistance needed to recover from a government imposed economic disaster.

We urge you to oppose the McCain-Reed amendment 498, and the Johnson amendments 877 and 878 to the National Defense Authorization Act, HR 2810. If you have any questions, please contact the UDWC legislative co-chair Steve Lenkart at (202) 216-4458.

Thank you.