



NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES, IAMAW, AFL-CIO



NFFE-IAM Opposes the VET Protection Act (H.R. 1461) and the VA Accountability First Act (H.R. 1259)

Position: Although the Veterans, Employees and Taxpayers Protection Act of 2017 (H.R. 1461), is titled to sound like a promising bill, it is only a guise for legislation that will make it impossible for federal employee unions to carry out their statutory representational duties. Introduced by Rep. Jodey Arrington (R-TX), the bill would impose undue restrictions on unions' ability to provide adequate representation to their members in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). It allows members to drop their membership at any time; it interferes with the election of chosen union leadership; and it extends the time when a new hire is not protected by due process rights. NFFE-IAM *strongly opposes* the Vet Protection Act of 2017. Secondly, the VA Accountability First Act of 2017 is another inappropriately titled bill, as it will unjustly tear apart the effectiveness and efficiency of the workforce at the VA. Introduced by Rep. David Roe (R-TN), the legislation will starve the VA of its talent and the means to succeed, thereby providing unjustifiable leverage for private sector investments in veteran's care. Moreover, the sponsors of this bill have needed to spread false information and gross mischaracterizations about what the bill will prevent and produce. H.R. 1259 passed in the House, but draft legislation is pending in the Senate. NFFE-IAM *strongly opposes* the VA Accountability Act of 2017.

NFFE-IAM opposes the VET Protection Act (H.R. 1461), as the legislation will:

- Place arbitrary restrictions on official time specifically to ensure that VA employees do not receive adequate representation by amending current law to cap the percentage of time union officers can spend on representational duties while using official time.
- Extend probationary periods for new hires from 12 months to 18 months, making it more difficult for the VA to fill its 45,000 open jobs with highly trained, experienced professionals.
- Allow members to revoke their membership at any time, an unwarranted attempt to break the union and reduce membership.
- Ban communication with Congress while on duty time, eliminating the ability for unions to inform Congress of the impact of new or pending legislation or an agency's failure to comply with Congressional inquiries or requests.
- Eliminate a valuable tool for resolving conflict and helping management make good decisions regarding resource allocation, training, and technology needs.

NFFE-IAM opposes the VA Accountability First Act (H.R. 1259), as the legislation (passed in the House, Senate bill coming soon) will:

- Destroy the union protections of every VA employee by eliminating their rights to use grievance and arbitration procedures to fight for their jobs
- Place veterans in danger because front line medical and administrative staff will fear for their jobs if they speak out against management or political appointees.
- Create at-will employment by removing systematic protections against prohibited personnel practices against subordinates.
- Eliminate legitimate due process for those accused of poor performance or misconduct by forcing ridiculously short timeliness on employees and their counsels for representation.
- Limit the legal options of administrative judges at the MSPB, a clear sign that the intent of the bill is to corrupt fair and effective workforce practices.
- Not address resource, recruiting and retention at the VA; in fact, the bill will create bigger problems in each of these areas.

