



NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES

Affiliated with the International Association of Machinists & Aerospace Workers, AFL-CIO

April 30, 2015

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the National Federation of Federal Employees (NFFE) and the 110,000 federal employees we represent throughout the United States and abroad, including the nurses, doctors, and other healthcare professionals at 17 Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) hospitals across the country, I am writing to urge your opposition to the Hice Amendment #149 to eliminate the use of official time that will be offered to the Fiscal Year 2016 Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act (H.R. 2029).

The Hice Amendment would serve no purpose but to erode collective bargaining rights for dedicated VA employees at *greater* cost to American taxpayers. Federal unions like NFFE are legally required to provide representation to all members of a VA bargaining unit, whether or not those employees elect to pay voluntary union dues. Union representation for employees working their way through administrative procedures is a cost-effective process for administrating and adjudicating agency policies. The alternative to official time is for the VA to needlessly pay for costly third-party attorney and arbitrator fees. The Hice Amendment would eliminate the use official time at the VA, which is critical to the cost-saving arrangement which benefits the agency, the workers, and the American taxpayers.

Official time is essential to maintaining workplace safety at the VA. Union representatives elected by their peers in the workplace use official time to set procedures to protect employees from on-the-job hazards, which are ever-present in a hospital environment. Without official time, the safety of VA employees could be compromised. This would cause the incidence of injuries on the job to increase, employee morale to suffer, and the number of VA employees hurt on the job to increase. Making the VA workplace safer is just one important way *of many* that official time is necessary and in the public interest, as the law requires.

Unlike those who attempt to trivialize the importance of official time, using this time for internal union business is strictly prohibited by law. Under current law, official time may not be used to solicit membership, conduct internal union meetings, elect union officers, or engage in any partisan political activities. The notion that official time is used for these purposes is blatantly false.

Again, I strongly urge you to vote 'NO' on the Hice Amendment #149 to H.R. 2029. If you have any questions, please contact NFFE Legislative Director Drew Halunen at (202) 216-4458 or dhalunen@nffe.org.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

William R. Dougan
National President