



NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES

Affiliated with the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers



NFFE News Release

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Veterans Affairs Employees Appeal to VA Secretary: “Listen to Us!” – Union Coalition Urges Congress to Help

Washington, D.C. – Today, the National Federation of Federal Employees (NFFE) and its coalition partners representing more than 350,000 staff and practitioners at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) sent a joint letter to VA Secretary Robert Wilkie in a desperate plea for management to engage workers and veterans during the increasingly dangerous Coronavirus outbreak. In the letter, the coalition describes how VA staff and practitioners have been sidelined from planning and response meetings, and how once-intact lines of communication are now absent causing a disconnect between VA executives and front-line professionals.

“We are talking about very seasoned professionals, many of them battle-tested veterans themselves. When they say something is wrong, everyone needs to listen,” stated Randy Erwin, NFFE National President, after receiving calls from VA workers who cite increasing chaos caused by insufficient equipment, training, and protocols made worse under a lack of adequate communication within the VA.

In addition to the letter to Secretary Wilkie, the coalition sent a similar letter to Congress urging their assistance to encourage VA management to reopen former lines of communications, allowing for the two-way sharing of critical information. Both letters come after an appeal to the VA a week ago that included a request to actively engage employee representatives such as health and safety officers at the national, VISN (Veterans Integrated Service Networks), and facility levels. The request fortified the need for “*joint protocols, increased workforce training and communication, enhanced PPE, surge plans and new investigation requirements following exposure.*”

“How the VA can simply ignore the structures and communication channels that successfully brought management and workers together in mission for decades, is beyond me,” Erwin continued. “This is about keeping people safe and keeping our veterans healthy. There are no second chances in this business. The message from VA employees and their representatives is simple: Listen to us!”

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Established in 1917, the National Federation of Federal Employees is the oldest union representing civil service federal employees. NFFE represents 110,000 federal employees in 35 departments and agencies government-wide. NFFE is affiliated with the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, AFL-CIO. For more information, go to www.nffe.org.