



NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES

Affiliated with the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers



NFFE News Release

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NFFE Opposes Senate Bill to Undercut VA Medical and Mental Health Services via a ‘Secret’ Grant Program

Washington, D.C. – The National Federation of Federal Employees (NFFE) and its VA labor coalition partners have been very vocal in opposition to Section 201 of S. 785, the Commander John Scott Hannon Veterans Mental Health Care Improvement Act of 2019, which, if passed, will establish a secretive grant program for veterans suicide prevention without any competition or oversight from the Veterans Administration (VA).

“This legislation creates a new grant program that would result in a costly and dangerous use of tax dollars to private entities without any necessary requirements or oversight of the care provided,” said Randy Erwin, NFFE National President. “This is a terrible idea that will adversely impact our nation’s cherished veterans.”

The legislation as passed by the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs authorizes the VA secretary to distribute funds without any open or fair competition. In addition, the proposed language contains no oversight responsibilities to monitor the recipients’ use of grant money after it is distributed by the VA, such as the evaluation of care funded by the grant.

Funding for the grant program would come from money diverted from existing VA programs that offer medical and mental health services, causing an additional strain on VA programs and staff. This grant program provision continues and accelerates the recent trend of outsourcing VA services at a monetary loss to the comprehensive, integrated medical and mental health care system that serves millions of veterans every year.

“This legislation would give the VA Secretary unprecedented latitude to dole out hard-earned tax dollars without the oversight and controls necessary to ensure that precious resources allocated to treat veterans are being used for their intended purpose,” Erwin continued. “This runs contrary to any legitimate government grant program. Worse, it carelessly places our veterans in harm’s way while sacrificing real mental health programs.”

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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.