

NFFE News



VA to Discontinue Charging NFFE VA Locals Rent for Office Space

February 23, 2021

Last week, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) informed the NFFE VA Council that it will no longer charge rent to NFFE locals for union office space. The VA will now provide office space to the union rent-free, consistent with negotiated collective bargaining agreements. Further, the VA committed to finding office space for local union officials that chose to vacate their space rather than pay rent.

This represents a dramatic change from the VA under the previous administration. Approximately a year ago, the VA instructed locals to either sign rental agreements on union office spaces or vacate them pursuant to an Executive Order by then-President Trump, going back on the agreement NFFE and the VA reached regarding office space in our last master agreement. NFFE brought litigation in response. Then on February 16, 2021, the VA notified NFFE's VA Council that it reviewed the existing union office leases following President Biden's Executive Order on January 22, 2021, and will not renew them.



Members of NFFE's VA collective bargaining team during master agreement negotiations in Washington, D.C.

"The Union welcomes the Biden Administration's order reestablishing union offices at VA facilities," said NFFE VA Council President, Jeff Shapiro. "The Union is in motion to get back our offices that were held in each facility prior to the Trump order. We are experiencing some pushback and delay, particularly where vacated space was repurposed for mission work. In those cases, we hope facilities find similarly situated offices for us quickly. The VA Council will be monitoring all its locals to make sure facilities follow the Biden Executive Order and return offices in a timely and reasonable manner. With the reestablishment of these offices, employees will more easily consult with union officials and facilitate the resolution of workplace disputes. This change will provide for better labor relations, which promotes better care for veterans."

NFFE applauds the VA's decision regarding office space. The on-site integration of labor and management personnel is critical to the success of VA veterans care initiatives and workforce policies. While more needs to be done at the VA to fully implement President Biden's January 22, 2021, Executive Order encouraging collective bargaining—such as the immediate and full restoration of official time—the decision to cancel rent and bring labor professionals back on-site is an excellent first step toward the restoration of vital collaboration and workplace protections for VA employees.

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