NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES,
IAMAW, AFL-CIO

NFFE-IAM and the Department of Veterans Affairs – 118th Congress

Position: **Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) employees endure deteriorating working conditions, worsening pay, and political activists attempting to privatize VA care through lies and retaliation. It is critically important that the Congress act quickly to preserve one of the world's best medical and healthcare systems, per 2023 third-party medical studies. Congress itself is responsible for much of the consternation within the VA. Laws were passed that destroyed legitimate transparency and broke processes that protected care providers and veterans from mismanagement, corruption, and inferior outsourced care. Congress must restore a system of checks and balances at the VA to protect veteran care.**

VA Employee Fairness Act – Passed in the 117th House, this bill: 1) Restores peer reviews that give VA clinicians and patients a louder voice regarding care, 2) Allows negotiations regarding workplace practices that affect patient safety, working conditions, competitive pay for retention and recruitment, and 3) Improves transparency and accountability by preventing retaliation against VA staff who report problems.
- It restores systematic protections against corruption and management malfeasance by removing 38 USC 7422 created by the failed VA W&A Act of 2017 (as cited by an I.G. report).
- It holds managers and political appointees accountable for VA operations and veteran care.
- It helps to prevent retaliation, discrimination, and false disciplinary claims against VA staff.
- It restores full collective bargaining, official time, and impartial appeals to Title 38 employees.
- It improves the overall transparency, effectiveness, and efficiency of VA care for veterans.

Improve VA & VHA Patient Care and Workforce Efficiencies, Effectiveness, and Competitiveness.
Recently, several poorly written laws have failed veterans by substituting solid health and medical policy for false political soundbites meant to increase outsourcing of veterans' care, even if that care is inferior. The politicians passing these laws see veterans as dollar signs instead of a promise to keep. It is time to reverse that.
- Permanently dismantle a corrupt internal VA board for disciplinary review headed by political appointees. As cited in VA OIG report #18-04968-249, this office improperly blocked third-party review of appeals via MSPB, and broke transparency of veteran care at every level, especially private care providers. In other words, it retaliated against VA staff for speaking up and ignored bad care by private providers—which is what the office was designed to do (*Corruptio optimi pessima)*.
- Reform Doctor/Clinician Pay. Like most performance pay, the VA is fraught with farcical metrics, pay inconsistencies, and missing payouts. Instead, Congress should boost base pay complemented by meaningful market pay, specialty pay, and automatic annual COLAs.
- Fill vacancies before more mandates. Fill thousands of VA vacancies with qualified federal employees.
- Fortify Psychologists. Veteran suicide and depression are at record highs. It's time to help psychologists and stop burn out by untying "book-ability" to performance, allow bargaining over working conditions and pay rules, enhance career development, and reform compensation.
- Pass the VA CPE Modernization Act. This bill modernizes continuing education programs in the VA by expanding the types of clinicians who are eligible to receive reimbursement for continuing education and increase the amounts they can receive. Current continuing education allowances were set more than 30 years ago and no longer reflect the requirements of modern medicine.

VA Medical Security Report Act of 2023 – To authorize a study on the growing safety and security crisis at VA facilities and recognize areas for improvement to help VA police officers properly staff, identify, and manage the unique challenges of providing a safe environment for veterans to receive care.