

NFFE News



NFFE San Francisco VA Nurses Picketing in Protest of Misguided Scheduling Change

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Nearly 100 nurses and other healthcare professionals of National Federation of Federal Employees (NFFE) Local 1 working at the San Francisco Veterans Affairs Medical Center (SFVAMC) have begun picketing in protest of an unjust schedule change. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) management has made the unilateral decision to disallow the flexible work schedule called “72/80,” that allows nurses to work for 72 hours while being paid for 80. Management plans to institute the change starting on November 5th, and up to this point has refused to bargain with NFFE leaders.

The 72/80 schedule was implemented to minimize burnout and address severe staffing shortages among registered nurses across the country. The flexible hours give nurses more time to take care of their families and to recuperate from the demands of their stressful duties caring for our nation’s veterans. The 72/80 schedule has been helpful in the recruitment and retention of qualified registered nurses and has boosted morale at SFVAMC.

However, management is disallowing the flexible schedule to reduce costs caused by the outsourcing of patient care to private providers. “We have been told by our leadership that there is a \$76 million deficit and that part of the way they want to deal with that is by taking away our flexible work schedules,” said one NFFE member. “To now take that away and have us work more for no difference in pay, no increase in pay, is a huge problem for us.”

Local NFFE leaders and healthcare professionals at the facility are worried about the negative impact that reverting away from the 72/80 schedules will have on the retention of qualified nurses, who may seek employment with more competitive medical facilities in the area. “That would absolutely happen,” one nurse stated. “There are so many nurses that are hanging on because they care about our veterans.”

NFFE Local 1 members have received support from local San Francisco politicians, including District 1 Supervisor Connie Chan and District 5 Supervisor Dean Preston. “I am proud that the brave union nurses at SFVA are coming together to collectively advocate for better working conditions, which will benefit their own health, decrease burnout and turnover, but also improve the quality of care that their patients need and deserve. My office urges SFVA executive leadership to work with the union in good faith, so that leadership, frontline nurses, and their union representatives can find a workable solution,” Preston said in a letter to SFVA management.

“I am outraged that VA management at the San Francisco VA Medical Center has made this decision without consulting Local 1 leaders or NFFE headquarters staff,” said NFFE National President Randy Erwin. “This violates our master bargaining agreement, and we will be taking all the necessary steps to ensure this misguided change does not occur. VA facilities across the country are facing severe staffing problems, including the SFVA Medical Center. Taking away flexible schedules will surely exacerbate these issues, and patient care will suffer. I applaud NFFE Local 1 members for organizing informational pickets and using collective action to stand up for what is right in their workplace. Our veterans deserve the highest standard of care, and our dedicated frontline VA workers deserve flexible schedules and competitive pay for the tremendous professional service they provide.”

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