



NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES, IAMAW, AFL-CIO



NFFE-IAM and the Department of Veterans Affairs – 119th Congress

Position: VA employees and veterans are facing worsening conditions, stagnant pay, and growing political efforts to privatize veterans' care through misinformation and retaliation. Congress must act swiftly to protect what independent studies in 2023 confirmed as one of the “world’s best healthcare systems.” Much of the current dysfunction stems from congressional actions that weakened oversight, undermined transparency, and exposed providers and veterans to mismanagement and substandard outsourced care. It’s time to restore accountability and protect the integrity of VA services through a renewed system of checks and balances.

Putting Veterans First Act of 2025 (S. 1068) — This bold, comprehensive legislation prioritizes veterans and military families by safeguarding the VA, its healthcare professionals, and the critical programs and benefits they depend on from political attacks and erosion.

VA Employee Fairness Act—Passed by the House in the 117th Congress, this bill strengthens the VA healthcare system by restoring workplace protections and amplifying the voices of clinicians and patients. It holds managers and political appointees accountable for VA operations and veteran care. Key provisions:

- **Restores peer review systems**, giving VA clinicians and patients greater influence over care decisions.
- **It allows bargaining over workplace practices** affecting patient safety, working conditions, and competitive pay—critical for recruitment and retention.
- **Improves transparency and accountability** by protecting VA professionals from retaliation.

Strengthen VA & VHA Care: Improve Patient Outcomes, Workforce Stability, and System Integrity

Recent laws have failed veterans by replacing sound healthcare policy with political talking points, promoting privatization even when outsourced care is of lower quality. Some lawmakers view veterans as profit centers instead of keeping the promise to care for them. Congress must act:

- **Pass the VA Correct Compensation Act.** Allows Title 38 employees to grieve inaccurate paychecks.
- **Pass the Protecting VA Employees Act.** Reinstates the “substantial evidence” requirement removed under the failed 2017 Accountability Act to restore fairness in disciplinary standards.
- **Remove Section 101 from pending VA bills.** Block attempts to shift VA funding to lower-quality private providers held to less rigorous standards.
- **Shut down the VA Office of Accountability and Whistleblower Protection.** As cited in VA OIG Report #18-04968-249, this politically directed office retaliated against staff, blocked appeals, and obscured care failures, especially from private providers. It must be dismantled.
- **Reform Clinician Pay Structure.** Eliminate broken performance metrics and inconsistent payouts. Strengthen base pay, boost market and specialty pay, and provide automatic COLAs to reflect real market conditions.
- **Support Mental Health Providers.** Combat burnout and turnover amid rising veteran suicide rates. End “bookability” quotas, allow full bargaining rights, expand training, and improve compensation for mental health professionals.
- **Pass the VA CPE Modernization Act.** Update the 30-year-old continuing education caps and expand eligibility to more clinical roles. Modern care demands modern training support.