

WE OPPOSE H.R. 1461

June 6, 2017

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative:

As unions representing federal and postal employees across the country, we urge you to oppose H.R. 1461, the “Veterans, Employees and Taxpayers Protection Act of 2017,” introduced by Representative Jodey Arrington (R-TX) when it comes to the House floor for a vote.

H.R. 1461 undermines due process rights of VA workers by inserting arbitrary limits on official time and thus erodes federal unions’ ability to represent their members. Eliminating fair representation for both union and non-union members, including over 120,000 VA-employed veterans, is ultimately detrimental to the workers, the Department, and the veterans this bill is supposed to protect.

Since its inception, official time has benefited agency operations by fostering a collaborative environment ultimately leading to increased government efficiency. Without official time, there is no system in place that allows federal employees to safely report issues of discrimination and abuse of federal resources or recommend ways in which agencies can improve the delivery of public services.

Official time is strictly for the conduct of representational duties on behalf of union members and non-union members, as spelled out in the law. Federal employees are not required to join a union, but federal unions are required to represent them. No union activities may be conducted on official time; union meetings and elections, member recruitment and other union work is conducted on employees’ volunteer time.

If enacted into law, the restrictions H.R. 1461 places on the Department of Veterans Affairs and the right to organize and represent workers and bargain collectively will set a dangerous and potentially wide-spread precedent for all agencies. **For those reasons, we urge you to vote “no” on H.R. 1461.**

Sincerely,

American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)
American Postal Workers Union
International Association of Fire Fighters, AFL-CIO
International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE)
National Air Traffic Controllers Association (NATCA)
National Association of Government Employees (NAGE)
National Association of Letter Carriers
National Education Association
National Federation of Federal Employees
National Nurses United
National Postal Mail Handlers Union
National Treasury Employees Union (NTEU)
National Weather Service Employees Organization
Professional Aviation Safety Specialists (PASS)
Patent Office Professional Association
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)