

FEDERAL WORKERS ALLIANCE

19 UNIONS COLLECTIVELY REPRESENTING 300,000 FEDERAL EMPLOYEES

March 24, 2017

Dear Representative:

The undersigned unions of the Federal Workers Alliance (FWA), collectively representing more than 300,000 federal workers, urge you to **VOTE NO on the Official Time Reform Act of 2017 (H.R. 1364)**. This bill passed out of committee under false pretenses through a series of serious mischaracterizations about federal official time use, and what H.R. 1364 will prevent and provide.

In summary, this bill targets individual federal workers (and their families) who have done nothing more than perform the lawful duties of their jobs, under the supervision of agency management representatives. The bill withholds service credit hours toward retirement from employees who work 80% or more in official time duty status. It also outlaws recruitment, retention and relocation funding for the same employees.

Most reprehensively, this bill **retroactively denies** employees their retirement service credit hours for time already worked if they retire on or after October 1, 2017. This provision serves no purpose other than to force certain employees who perform representational work into retirement or risk losing months or years of retirement service credit hours for doing nothing other than their lawful duties.

We would like you to understand the facts about H.R. 1364 and official time:

- Official time is not “union time.” Activities such as political and internal union business are already prohibited (e.g. the Hatch Act affords no exceptions for unions).
- Official time is used to address important workplace concerns including issues regarding safety, efficiency, mission effectiveness, employee engagement, and support to management to implement initiatives.
- Official time is used to advise and represent federal employees on personnel matters often saving the agency time and money by avoiding costly litigation.
- Official time is allotted through communications with agency representatives to ensure it is used carefully and in a way that benefits the workforce and the agency mission.

This bill cannot stand on its own merits. That is why we believe its supporters chose to fabricate problems with the official time process and then attempt to institute false solutions that will punish federal workers and their families.

Official time is a beneficial workforce practice. H.R.1364 falsely depicts this longstanding, important workplace process as illegitimate. The bill’s main goal is to target the financial security of individual federal employees for their lawful service to their colleagues and their agencies.

At a time when the checks and balances of the government are especially valuable and important tools, H.R. 1364 will discourage employees who wish to perform the important services provided using official time, which has been shown to be of significant value to agencies and civil service employees and encourages transparency and accountability in government.

Again, the undersigned unions of the FWA ask you to **VOTE NO on H.R. 1364**, the Official Time Reform Act of 2017.

Thank you for your review of this issue and supporting this request.

Sincerely,

American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO

Federal Education Association/National Education Association (FEA/NEA)

International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF)

International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAMAW)

International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW)

International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE)

International Organization of Masters, Mates and Pilots (MM&P)

Metal Trades Department, AFL-CIO (MTD)

National Association of Government Employees, SEIU

National Federation of Federal Employees (NFFE)

Overseas Federation of Teachers, AFT, AFL-CIO

Professional Aviation Safety Specialists (PASS)

Seafarers International Union/NMU (SIU)

Service Employees International Union (SEIU)

Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers (SMART)

SPORT Air Traffic Controllers Organization (SATCO)