



NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES

Affiliated with the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers



NFFE Press Release

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Contact: Steve Lenkart

Phone: (202) 216-4458

NFFE Responds to Congress Passing VA Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act: “Weakening Employee Protections Will Not Make the VA More Accountable”

Washington, D.C. – Yesterday, the House of Representatives passed the misleadingly-titled “Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act of 2017” (S. 1094), which passed the Senate last week. The bill is expected to be signed by President Donald Trump in the coming days.

This legislation would lower the burden of proof in cases involving alleged employee misconduct at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), weakening systematic protections for employees who challenge senior leaders and political appointees. The bill also dramatically shortens timelines for the handling of grievances and appeals to the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB), and eliminates the ability of an administrative judge to mitigate a penalty proposed by the agency.

Finally, the bill would permit the forfeiture of some employees’ pensions in certain circumstances—a practice that is prohibited in the private sector by federal pension law. Under this broad provision, a service-connected disabled veteran who works at the VA as a housekeeper or cemetery caretaker could lose his or her pension as the result of a DUI conviction.

A statement from Randy Erwin, National President of the National Federation of Federal Employees:

“I am grieved that during this time in our history, when civil service protections designed to keep workers safe from political intimidation or improper management conduct are so critical, that Congress would pass a bill to dissolve meaningful protections for employees at the VA who might speak up against unsafe practices and political coercion. Weakening VA employee protections will not make the VA more accountable; it will likely do the exact opposite. It is clear that Congress wanted to do something to increase accountability at the VA, and I share in that desire, but eliminating worker protections was not the right approach. History will not look back favorably on what this bill does or how it was rammed through Congress by politicians desperate to put a feather in their cap.”

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Established in 1917, the National Federation of Federal Employees is the oldest union representing civil service federal employees. NFFE represents 110,000 federal employees in 35 departments and agencies government-wide. NFFE is affiliated with the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, AFL-CIO. For more information, go to www.nffe.org.