



NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES

Affiliated with the International Association of Machinists & Aerospace Workers, AFL-CIO

May 15, 2018

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the 110,000 federal employees represented by the National Federation of Federal Employees (NFFE), I strongly urge you to **oppose the VA MISSION Act (S. 2372)** this week on the House floor. The VA Mission Act will deprive the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) of critical resources needed to provide a veteran-centric, integrated healthcare system by giving VA assets and funding away to private entities without meaningful accountability or transparency.

Specifically, this legislation will compromise veterans' care and services by doing the following:

- It would allow fragmented care at walk-in clinics that are not trained to assess the whole veteran, including proper care for service-related injury and illness uncommon to the general public, and “hidden” conditions such as PTSD or marital or employment issues. Walk-in clinics and professionals untrained in VA care cheat veterans out of the chance to get well through Band-Aid medicine, and it exposes veterans to unnecessary procedures for profit instead of health.
- It would allow the VA Secretary—a temporary employee of the VA—broad authority to privatize VA assets and funding without Congressional and stakeholder oversight will result in unwise decisions. Given the political pressure by private industry to privatize the VA, the unchecked deviation of assets and services from VA facilities and operations is dangerous, irresponsible, and imprudent. Decisions with long-term effects must require proper examination, input, and transparency.
- It would force veterans into fragmented private health care systems through closures of VA and VHA facilities, as authorized by a BRAC-like commission without proper limitations and guidance. The commission, subject to the same political pressure to privatize VA assets and services, can make determinations that increase long-term costs and decrease care access.
- In addition, it would provide automatic eligibility of non-VHA care providers based on misleading metrics; provides no replacement of VA funding lost to private providers; continues a lack of available means to evaluate private providers; continues chronic and insufficient staffing resources at the VA and VHA; and the list goes on.

The VA MISSION Act is a hastily assembled bill, possible only through parliamentary ruses, that ultimately will swindle veterans out of the quality and access to care that they deserve. In addition, given that many VA and VHA workers are veterans themselves, this bill hits them twice as hard by threatening their jobs and their health care. There are many recommendations and solutions for veterans care available other than what is specified in this bill. I urge you to oppose this harmful bill.

Sincerely,

Randy Erwin
National President