June 5, 2019

The Honorable Robert Wilkie
Secretary of Veterans Affairs
United States Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Ave NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Wilkie,

We are writing this letter regarding the collective bargaining rights of federal workers at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. We are deeply concerned that the VA has pursued anti-labor policies with the union representing 260,000 of its frontline employees, the American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO (AFGE).

We believe the VA may be acting to precipitate a breakdown in negotiations by insisting on proposals that are similar to specific provisions of Executive Orders 13836, 13837, and 13839. Such proposals make it appear that the VA is seeking to circumvent the order of the United States District Court that enjoined many provisions of the Executive Orders.

Furthermore, beyond conflicts with the enjoined Executive Orders, we are alarmed that the VA’s initial contract proposal is a gross departure from the current contract in place between the VA and AFGE. We are concerned that these actions will have a detrimental effect on veterans depending on the VA for medical care and other vital services.

Notably, the VA proposal includes limiting medical professionals in reporting violations that could threaten patient safety, bars employees from filing grievances against unjust disciplinary actions, and removes the ability of workers to challenge employer errors on payroll.

If the contract VA proposes was implemented, it would diminish labor protections and the collective bargaining rights that Congress intended, and would have a severe, destabilizing effect on agency operations, employee morale and the VA’s ability to deliver high quality healthcare and benefits to America’s Veterans.

As such, we strongly encourage the VA to bargain with AFGE in good faith, in full accordance with the established ground rules, and with the objective of improving care for our
veterans. Unions representing VA workers help improve the care veterans receive and the services they rely on by creating an efficient working environment.

Thank you for your consideration.

Anthony G. Brown  
Member of Congress

Donald Norcross  
Member of Congress

Nanette Diaz Barragan  
Member of Congress

Donald S. Beyer, Jr.  
Member of Congress

Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.  
Member of Congress

Earl Blumenauer  
Member of Congress

Brendan F. Boyle  
Member of Congress

Anthony Brindisi  
Member of Congress

Julia Brownley  
Member of Congress

Cheri Bustos  
Member of Congress

Tony Cárdenas  
Member of Congress

Kathy Castor  
Member of Congress

David N. Cicilline  
Member of Congress

Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.  
Member of Congress
Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress

Dwight Evans
Member of Congress

Brian Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress

Ruben Gallego
Member of Congress

Jesus G. "Chuy" Garcia
Member of Congress

Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress

Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress

Katie Hill
Member of Congress

Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress

Abby Finkenauer
Member of Congress

Marcia L. Fudge
Member of Congress

John Garamendi
Member of Congress

Vicente Gonzalez
Member of Congress

Deb Haaland
Member of Congress

Brian Higgins
Member of Congress

Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress
Andy Levin  
Member of Congress

Daniel W. Lipinski  
Member of Congress

Ted W. Lieu  
Member of Congress

Zoe Lofgren  
Member of Congress

Alan Lowenthal  
Member of Congress

Ben Ray Luján  
Member of Congress

Aita M. Lowey  
Member of Congress

Elaine G. Luria  
Member of Congress

Stephen F. Lynch  
Member of Congress

Tom Malinowski  
Member of Congress

Betty McCollum  
Member of Congress

A. Donald McEachin  
Member of Congress

James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress

Jerry McNerney  
Member of Congress

Grace Meng  
Member of Congress

Gwen MosQuito  
Member of Congress
Kathleen M. Rice  
Member of Congress

Max Rose  
Member of Congress

Lucille Roybal-Allard  
Member of Congress

C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger  
Member of Congress

Bobby L. Rush  
Member of Congress

Tim Ryan  
Member of Congress

Gregorio Killi Camacho Sablan  
Member of Congress

Linda T. Sánchez  
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John P. Sarbanes  
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Jan Schakowsky  
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Bradley S. Schneider  
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Kurt Schrader  
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Donna E. Shalala  
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Adam Smith  
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Thomas R. Suozzi  
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Mark Takano  
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Dina Titus  
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Paul D. Tonko  
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Jennifer Wexton  
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David Trone  
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Nydia M. Velázquez  
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Susan Wild  
Member of Congress
John Yarmuth  
Member of Congress

Don Young  
Member of Congress