

Dear Representative/Senator,

I am one of the 700,000 federal and D.C. government employees represented by the American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO (AFGE). As a frontline employee at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) I go to work every day with one goal in mind: providing the best possible care and service to our nation's veterans. I am writing to you today because my ability to do that – to serve our heroes – is threatened. The VA is moving to execute the President's three federal workforce executive orders, even though the Department has failed to meet their bargaining obligations with my union. As your constituent I am asking you to urgently weigh in with the Secretary of Veteran Affairs and demand that they bargain with the union before implementing these dangerous executive orders.

If implemented as written these executive orders would have a terrible impact on workplace morale and our ability as workers to speak out about dangerous behavior. Specifically, the executive orders would severely restrict the ability of employee representatives to function and represent workers who may be the subject of improper political pressure, retaliation for whistleblowing activities, sexual harassment, or other inappropriate actions. Arbitrary limits on the use of official time and restrictions on the ability of workers to receive assistance in challenging adverse actions mean that federal employees will effectively lose due process rights and representation.

Implementation of the executive orders comes right on the heels of the VA declaring that they have reached an impasse with the union in bargaining a new contract. The VA made this decision after only signing off on 13 out of 73 total articles. We have spent the last year begging the Department to bargain in good faith and work toward a mutually agreeable contract. Sadly, they have refused. Now we are seeing further attacks on our rights and failure to bargain on major changes to working conditions. These changes will have significant impact on every VA across the country, which is why the VA should not implement these executive orders without adequate time to bargain with the union.

I hope that you will weigh in with the VA and ask them to bargain with the union and implement these executive orders in a way that will not completely silence frontline employees. Thank you for your time and consideration of this request.

Sincerely,