



# Dignity. Fairness. Respect.



Out of Many/One Union  
AFGE NVAC/AFL-CIO

## VA CONTRACT TALKING POINTS

### Key Points

- 1** President Trump's Veterans Affairs Secretary Robert Wilkie is plotting to cripple the union contract between the VA and its 260,000 AFGE-represented employees, which will make it harder for front-line workers to give veterans the care they deserve.
- 2** The Trump administration's scheme eliminates safeguards that ensure whistleblowers are protected from retaliation for standing up for veterans, that guarantee VA employees are adequately trained so veterans always receive the same high standard of care, and that protect workplace safety – language that provides veterans and VA workers alike with a safe and secure place to work and to receive care.
- 3** This latest Trump administration plot not only strips VA workers – about one-third of whom are veterans themselves – of their rights, it also threatens quality care for veterans, and paves the way for a scheme to outsource veterans' health care that no one wants.
- 4** This administration's proposal sets up VA employees to fail and will likely lead to worse care for our veterans.
- 5** It's also unpopular. More privatization and outsourcing veterans' health care is opposed by the vast majority of veterans and every major veterans' organization.
- 6** Veterans deserve high-quality care, and VA workers need a fair labor agreement to continue to provide that care. Period.

### How Wilkie's Proposal Hurts Veterans:

- An attack on VA workers is an attack on veterans, as one-third of employees working at the VA are veterans.
- Only VA employees can provide veterans with the specialized care they require, yet Wilkie's proposal jeopardizes that care by opening the door to wholesale privatization of the VA.
- VA employees have pioneered groundbreaking treatments for traumatic brain injury, spinal cord injuries, post-traumatic stress, and other ailments that are far more common among veterans than the general population. Privatizing the VA would imperil future discoveries and medical advancements, which benefit all health care consumers.
- Wilkie's proposal also fails to address the 49,000 still-vacant positions that the VA has failed to fill – the majority of which are doctors, nurses, and other health care positions. That's an alarming increase of nearly 4,000 vacancies since August of last year, and that means crucial positions needed to serve our veterans are currently unfilled.

## How Wilkie's Proposal Hurts VA Workers:

- Discourages employees from bringing to light issues that hurt their ability to take care of veterans by eliminating whistleblower protections.
- Bars employees from filing grievances against unjust disciplinary actions and other workplace violations.
- Leaves more issues to the discretion of managers, allowing them to play favorites when making decisions about reassignments, shift scheduling, accommodations for employees with disabilities, and other issues.
- Severely restricts the ability to telework and allows managers to cancel or change telework agreements for any reason with just 12 hours advance notice.
- Prevents nurses and other health care professionals from having input into routine work matters like training, workplace safety, schedules and assignments – which will make it impossible for the VA to compete against other health care employers that consider the input of front-line workers and their representatives.

## Background

AFGE and the VA will begin negotiations on May 27, 2019 on a new contract to cover 260,000 bargaining unit employees represented by the union.

On May 2, the VA submitted to AFGE's National VA Council a 331-page proposal that overhauls the existing contract and eliminates entirely or effectively 42 articles that help guarantee a fair workplace.

The VA's scheme to gut worker protections advances the Trump administration's objective to privatize and outsource veterans' care and redirect billions of dollars from serving veterans at the VA to instead, give vouchers to veterans for substandard care.

This is not the Trump administration's first attempt to gut workers' rights for their own political gain. Many of the VA's proposals are lookalike anti-labor policies President Trump tried to implement governmentwide last year through three Executive Orders that didn't hold up in federal court.

Since the court has blocked the administration's illegal orders from taking effect, Trump's political appointees are hijacking the collective bargaining process at the VA and other agencies, including Social Security and the Department of Education, in an attempt to implement many of the proposals.

## Online Resources

Visit [www.afge.org/iServeVeterans](http://www.afge.org/iServeVeterans) for updated news and information.