



## VA Eviction Talking Points for Members to Use with Media

- Today, the VA under this administration is taking an unprecedented step in evicting VA employees' unions from the worksite.
- Make no mistake, this is union-busting, plain and simple. It's an attempt to strip VA employees of their ability to hold rogue managers accountable and resolve workplace issues.
- The political appointees running the VA are right now stooping so low as to move furniture out of office space held by unions for decades, in some cases. They told us the furniture is unavailable to rent. So even if we decided to rent the space, we wouldn't have basic office needs like a chair, a desk, or a filing cabinet.
- But other groups inside this building are able to occupy space at the VA without issue. {Name a few groups inside your VA}. Somehow it seems like only the actual VA employees – many of whom are veterans themselves and all of whom come to work every day to serve the veterans in our communities – it seems like we're the only ones being targeted for different, discriminatory treatment.
- Our union does important work every day to make the VA the best place for veterans in our community to receive comprehensive care. We hold rogue managers accountable, help resolve workplace disputes, and bring issues that affect veterans' care to management's attention for resolution.
- In fact, it was unionized VA employees who have saved veterans lives by blowing the whistle in cases like the deadly Legionnaires outbreak in the Pittsburgh VA just a few short years ago.
- If the VA keeps whittling away at employees' rights inside the VA, if they keep hammering away at morale like they have been with actions like these, if they keep giving unaccountable managers absolute authority, if they keep making it harder to frontline employees to resolve issues, it's going to impact the quality of care our veterans receive.
- Our union has already filed a national grievance about this and local unions like ours are filing our own grievances at the local level as well. We intend to exhaust every option available to us to fight back against this blatant union busting.
- Whether it's a business or a VA hospital, you can't run an effective organization if you are constantly at war with your own frontline employees and doing things to make them feel not just silenced – but like their voice doesn't matter to you at all.
- According to [2017 statistics from the Economic Policy Institute](#), veterans themselves are 33% more likely to be covered by a union contract than the average American – so

veterans understand the importance of unions and the benefits unions bring to the worksite.

- Every veteran should know that the VA is kicking unions out of the worksite, hurting the frontline employees who provide them care – and every veteran should have a problem with that and the impact it may have on their care.

### **VA Eviction Do's/Don'ts**

- **DON'T** speak to the media in your capacity as a VA employee, but **DO** identify yourself first as a leader of your AFGE local, speaking in that capacity, who is also a VA employee (e.g. Andrew, president of AFGE Local 9999, and an employee at the VA). Also **DO** identify yourself as a veteran if applicable.
- **DO** plan any event/rally/press conference you intend to have off of government property while you are on leave or a lunch break.
- **DO** reach out to local allies and community groups, especially those who work on veterans' issues. **DO** share talking points and invite them to participate in your media event.
- **DO** talk about this as the union being evicted from your space and **DO** mention how long your local has occupied this space, without any issues, throughout multiple administrations.
- **DO** talk about the other organizations inside the VA who are offered space free of charge or by renting the space and **DO** point out when they are being treated in a different way than you.
- **DO** point out that the union is made up of actual employees of the VA who work every day to ensure workplace issues are resolved in a timely manner so that our veterans receive the top-notch care they deserve. **DO** point out when these other organizations do not meet that standard.
- **DON'T** use phrases like “official time” or “go back to work” regarding losing official time and performing your regular job function; but **DO** talk about the way management wants to take away the work time you spend helping resolve workplace disputes, holding rogue managers accountable, bringing issues that affect care to management's attention for resolution, and performing other vital tasks that make the VA a great place for veterans to receive care – and how veterans' care will suffer because of the VA's actions.

## VA Eviction Template Media Release

**Instructions:** Fill in the red sections with your information and distribute to local media you have identified.

**Union Members at {INSERT NAME OF YOUR FACILITY} VA to be Evicted from Office Space**  
*AFGE officials and VA employees call the move “union busting, plain and simple.”*

On January 31<sup>st</sup>, union members at the {insert name of your facility} VA will hold a short protest and address the media following their eviction from union office space inside the VA. This eviction is part of a broader, nationwide edict by the administration that all unions must be evicted from office space they have occupied at the VA – for decades, in some cases.

**What:** Protest and media availability following eviction from office

**Who:** Members of AFGE Local XXXX

**Where:** Address

**When:** Time

**RSVP:** Your local contact information

**IF YOU REQUIRE ANY HELP DISTRIBUTING THIS RELEASE AFTER FILLING IN THE APPROPRIATE SECTIONS PLEASE CONTACT TIM KAUFFMAN IN THE AFGE COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT ([tim.kauffman@afge.org](mailto:tim.kauffman@afge.org))**

## VA Eviction Template Letter to the Editor

**Instructions:** Fill in the red sections and then [click here](#) for details on how to submit your letter to the editor to the 100 largest U.S. newspapers.

Dear Editor:

I write today with an urgent message for our community as a member of **AFGE Local XXXX** which represents employees of the **{Insert name of your VA facility and also include who it represents such as nurses or other medical professionals}** and I am a veteran. **(if you are a veteran).**

On January 31st, the Department of Veterans Affairs has said it will evict employee unions from space we have held for decades at VA facilities across the nation, including our VA here **in {your town}**. They have made clear that they will remove all furniture like desks, chairs, and filing cabinets, so even if we tried to rent the space, we would only have access to a useless, empty room. All this, despite the fact that many other organizations – organizations that are not made up of VA employees like **{name a few at your facility}** – are allowed to have space inside the VA.

Let's be clear: This is union busting by the political appointees who are running the VA, plain and simple. This discriminatory treatment of its own employees shows the VA under this administration will stop at nothing to strip away the rights of front-line caregivers.

All this is in spite of the fact that our union helps resolve workplace disputes inside the VA, holds rogue managers accountable, brings life-or-death issues that affect veterans' care to the public's attention, and performs other vital tasks that make the VA the best place for veterans to receive comprehensive care.

Make no mistake: Our union will still be here, fighting for VA employees and the veterans we care for every day. But the VA's actions in trying to silence the voice of its employees will make that work immeasurably harder. And all of us will pay the price for their error.

Sincerely,

**YOUR NAME**  
**Member or Officer of**  
**AFGE Local XXXX**