



AMERICAN FEDERATION OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES, AFL-CIO

Eric Bunn Sr.
National Secretary-Treasurer

Dr. Everett B. Kelley
National President

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Dear Senator:

On behalf of the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) and the National Veterans Affairs Council (NVAC), representing over 320,000 Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) personnel, I urge you to **strongly oppose S. 4744 / H.R. 9237**, the “Take Care of America’s Veterans Act.” While this omnibus package is being advanced under the guise of the bipartisan “Major Richard Star Act,” it has been packaged with benefit cuts to other veterans and provisions designed to further privatize the VA healthcare system and to erode collective bargaining rights for VA psychologists.

Congressional leadership is attempting to rush this omnibus through to secure a short-term political victory, holding needed new benefits hostage to privatization and offsetting benefit cuts. Instead of passing the “Major Richard Star Act” as a clean, standalone bill—which has near-unanimous bipartisan support—this legislation would harm the veterans it purports to help through:

- **Severe Cuts to Veteran Benefits:** To offset the cost of the benefits, the bill eliminates or sharply reduces critical disability compensation for sleep apnea and tinnitus. According to official VA analysis, this provision will strip or reduce benefits for up to **1.5 million veterans**, slashing future disability payments by **\$57 billion over the next 10 years** and drawing opposition from the Disabled American Veterans (DAV), the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), and other major Veteran Service Organizations.
- **Accelerated VA Privatization:** The bill codifies flawed “access standards” for eight unalterable years, locking in drive-time and wait-time rules that funnel veterans into private care where providers are not bound by these same proximity or wait-time standards. It further undermines the VA by establishing an unmonitored three-year private mental health and substance use pilot grant program and expanding unproven automation tools within the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA).
- **Erosion of Collective Bargaining and Workplace Rights:** The bill strips approximately 4,500 VA psychologists of their Hybrid Title 38 status and moves them to Full Title 38 status. This reclassification eliminates their Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) appeal rights for adverse actions and subjects them to Section 7422 restrictions, effectively nullifying their collective bargaining rights and removing front-line defenses against clinical mismanagement. Furthermore, the bill fails to include the “Protect Americas Workforce Act,” leaving punitive, anti-worker executive policies intact.

We urge you to reject this cynical attempt to strip benefits from 1.5 million veterans and further privatize the VA system. Instead, we urge Congress to enact the “Major Richard Star Act” as standalone legislation and work in a bipartisan manner to improve the VA.

Thank you for your continued dedication to those who have served. We urge your decisive **NO** vote on S. 4744 / H.R. 9237.

Sincerely,

Everett B. Kelley
National President

