



INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF PROFESSIONAL & TECHNICAL ENGINEERS AFL-CIO & CLC

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2018 IFPTE Issue Brief

115th Congress

Protecting our nation's Veterans – it is the least we can do

Overview - If there is one issue before Congress that should be bipartisan it is protecting the interests of our Veterans. From providing quality Veterans health care through the Veterans Administration (VA), to protecting the benefits that come with the GI bill, to ensuring that Veterans preference hiring and retention protections stay in place in the federal government, all of these matters and others that impact the lives of our Veterans should be addressed fairly and without partisanship. However, there have been some Veterans concerns, such as efforts to privatize the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), attack worker protections for VA employees, and erode Veterans Preference, that have unfortunately put Veterans in the middle of partisan Hill battles.

Veterans Preference - Many of the veterans who currently work for the federal government are assisting our current fighting men and women at the Department of Defense (DOD), while thousands more are serving their fellow Veterans at the Veterans Administration (VA). Many of these jobs are very complex, require specialized skills and the unique skill sets necessary to work directly with veterans, some of whom are coming back home with the physical and mental injuries that result from war. Despite these unique skill sets, some lawmakers on Capitol Hill are attempting to do away with and/or erode Veterans Preference. Sadly, the Fiscal Year 2016 (FY16) National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), which was ultimately signed into law, included language that waters down Veterans Preference in a Reduction-in-Force (RIF) situation. While IFPTE objected to that provision, it ultimately became law. IFPTE urges all lawmakers to reject all efforts to end or otherwise diminish Veterans Preference.

Veteran employment is great for the taxpayer – It is true that the investment taxpayers have made in our former military personnel who are now employed in the private sector, State and Local governments and within the federal government provide veterans with the training, knowledge, skills and abilities necessary to hit the ground running upon entering civilian employment. This is particularly true with jobs that are highly complex and technical in nature, compared to non-veterans who require the training necessary to properly perform many of the highly technical jobs in today's economy. When it comes to Veterans who enter government service or work for government contractors providing services to the taxpayers, the background and expertise that Veterans bring to their jobs provide a savings for the taxpayer.

Key bills before Congress that impact Veterans:

- 1) HR 424, sponsored by Rep. David Roe (R-FL), would lead to costly and damaging privatization of Veterans health care services by expanding the VA Choice program. This bill will result in a massive shift of federal resources from VA facilities to private health facilities, without accountability and justification of better services. This despite the recent findings by the IG, which found that in a rush to ensure that Choice program contractors receive favorable treatment and fast reimbursement, the VA has overpaid both TriWest and HealthNet almost \$100 million. Poll after poll shows that Veterans prefer the care provided them at VA run hospitals. **IFPTE recommendation: Oppose**
- 2) HR 3459, the VA Staffing and Vacancies Transparency Act of 2017, sponsored by Maryland Rep. Anthony Brown (D-MD) to bring better transparency in the VA, identify the necessary personnel the VA needs to meet the needs of Veterans, and provide the resources necessary to meet VA hiring needs. **IFPTE recommendation: Support**

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