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VA implementing presidential executive order governing union activities during official work hours

WASHINGTON — Today the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs announced it has begun implementing a recent presidential executive order (EO), which offered new guidelines for how union officials use work hours when representing federal employees.

Signed by President Trump on May 25, “[Executive Order 13837 Ensuring Transparency, Accountability, And Efficiency in Taxpayer Funded Union Time Use](#)” is intended to “ensure that taxpayer-funded union time is used efficiently and authorized in amounts that are reasonable, necessary, and in the public interest.”

Peter O’Rourke, VA’s acting secretary, said the executive order will increase monitoring and reporting guidelines among VA, the Office of Personnel Management and union leaders, while making that information available to the public.

“This executive order ensures the proper stewardship of taxpayer dollars,” O’Rourke said. “The order offers reasonable standards for union representatives and makes clear that they should spend the majority of their duty hours on federal government work.”

The executive order affects about 1,700 VA employees using taxpayer-funded union time. Approximately 300,000 VA employees are represented by one of five national unions. The order’s restrictions regarding time spent on government work includes member solicitation, lobbying activities, elections of union officials and collection of dues.

The executive order also outlines rules about the following:

- Negotiations about appropriate implementation of the executive order
- Standards for use of union time
- Employee conduct regarding agency time and resources, to include use of office or meeting spaces, phones and computer systems
- Preventing unlawful or unauthorized expenditures
- Agency reporting requirements, and
- Public disclosure and transparency.

Nathan Maenle, principal deputy assistant secretary for VA’s Office of Human Resources and Administration, offered an example of how the order is being implemented at VA.

“VA employees who previously spent 100 percent of their official work hours on union issues can devote no more than 25 percent of that time to the union under the new executive order,” Maenle said. “Union leaders must also request and receive approval of their use of taxpayer-funded union time to allow the VA to monitor the use of this time to ensure that it’s only used for authorized purposes.”

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