

VA**U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs**

News Release

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VA returns medical professionals currently serving unions to serving Veterans

Today the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs announced that it will be moving nearly 430 medical professionals from taxpayer-funded union work back to health care jobs serving Veterans.

The move, which will improve VA's ability to deliver health care to Veteran patients, will take effect Nov. 15 when VA repudiates certain provisions of master collective bargaining agreements VA accepted during the Obama administration with the following unions: American Federation of Government Employees, National Federation of Federal Employees, National Association of Government Employees and National Nurses United.

VA has a separate employment system under title 38 of the U.S. Code for medical employees. The repudiation will apply to all of VA's nearly 104,000 title 38 employees, eliminating all forms of taxpayer-funded union work for the following professions:

- Physician
- Dentist
- Podiatrist
- Chiropractor
- Optometrist
- Registered Nurse
- Physician assistant
- Expanded-Duty Dental Auxiliary

"It's common sense," VA Acting Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration Jacquelyn Hayes-Byrd said. "Allowing health care workers to do taxpayer-funded union work instead of serving Veterans impacts patient care negatively. President Trump has made it clear – VA employees should always put Veterans first. And when we hire medical professionals to take care of Veterans, that's what they should do at all times. No excuses, no exceptions."

As an example of the negative effect taxpayer-funded union time has on Veteran care, [one VA registered nurse](#) who was elected as a local union official receives 100 percent taxpayer funded union time. Although she no longer provides patient care, she continues to receive a nurse's salary, which at VA averages more than \$90,000 per year.

[Department-wide in fiscal year 2016](#), VA employees spent more than a million hours doing taxpayer-funded union work at a total cost of more than \$49 million.

VA is in the process of renegotiating several of VA's national collective bargaining agreements to ensure official time allocations are putting Veterans first. The negotiations are guided by federal law that permits VA to set taxpayer-funded union work (also known as official time) amounts contractually that are reasonable, necessary and in the public interest.