

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

News Release

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VA proposes new AFGE collective bargaining agreement

WASHINGTON - Today, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) presented its proposals to negotiate a new collective bargaining agreement (CBA) with the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE). AFGE represents over 250,000 federal employees within VA.

VA's proposals are designed to align with the statutory rights Congress provided to federal employee unions and VA while ensuring taxpayer resources are used first and foremost to benefit Veterans. The new proposals would replace the current CBA, in place since 2011.

The proposals include a number of significant changes designed to improve medical care, customer service, and staff accountability while maximizing value for taxpayers, including:

- Reducing taxpayer-funded union time for VA/AFGE employees from [more than one million hours per year](#) to 10,000 hours per year – redirecting more than \$48 million per year back to direct services and medical care for Veterans
- Empowering front line supervisors
- Streamlining the hiring and job classification process – potentially reducing the time it takes to hire certain positions by weeks or months
- Ensuring the contract doesn't interfere with the VA's ability to take action under the Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act, the MISSION Act and the VA Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act

"It's time for a reset in VA's approach to labor-management relations. A reluctance to challenge the status quo produced the current agreement, which includes many benefits that favor the union rather than the Veterans we are charged with serving," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "With VA facing thousands of vacancies, these proposals could add more than one million man-hours per year back into our work force – a vital influx of resources that would make an almost immediate difference for Veterans and the employees who care for them. These proposals make clear that service to Veterans must come first in all that we do, and I look forward to working with AFGE to ensure we achieve that goal."

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