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VA to implement Executive Orders governing taxpayer-funded union activities

In a victory for Veterans, taxpayers and VA employees, the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia has denied an attempt by the leadership of several government unions to block implementation of parts of the following three important Executive Orders (EOs):

- [Developing efficient, effective, and cost-reducing approaches to federal sector collective bargaining.](#)
- [Ensuring transparency, accountability, and efficiency in taxpayer funded union time use.](#)
- [Promoting accountability and streamlining removal procedures consistent with merit systems principles.](#)

VA plans to implement the EOs, which include numerous changes that will improve VA medical care, customer service and staff accountability while maximizing service to Veterans and value for taxpayers, including:

- Limiting the free or discounted use of government property for union business, potentially enabling the department to repurpose hundreds of thousands of square feet of office space currently used by unions.
 - At the [Salem VA Medical Center](#) alone, [AFGE National VA Council President Alma Lee](#) and other union officials are occupying more than [7,500 square feet of space](#) that could be freed up as a result of the EOs
- Reducing the maximum amount of time VA employees can spend during the workday serving unions, redirecting man hours back to direct services and medical care.
 - In FY 2016, VA employees spent [more than a million duty hours](#) on taxpayer-funded union time at a cost of more than \$49 million.
 - \$49 million is the cost of roughly: 355,000 naloxone injection kits to prevent Veterans' death by opioid overdose; (1) employing more than 550 VA suicide risk management social workers for one year; (2) or, providing a year of housing to more than 2,800 homeless Veterans. (3)

"Under this administration, VA is seeking more patients than ever before, more quickly than ever before, and studies show VA now compares favorably to the private sector for access and quality care, and in many cases exceeds it." said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "These executive orders will help VA continue to improve by ensuring our employees and resources are focused squarely on serving Veterans."

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(1) \$137.92/kit, according to the VA formulary

(2) GS-11, step 10 (\$88,450/year)

(3) VA's Grant and Per Diem Program provides \$47.36 per day per Veteran housed