

# NFFE NEWS



## RELEASE



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Contact: Randy Erwin, Legislative Director

Phone: 202-257-0948

## **NFFE BACKS BILL TO RESTORE MEANINGFUL BARGAINING RIGHTS FOR DEPT. OF VETERANS AFFAIRS HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS**

**Washington, D.C.** – The National Federation of Federal Employees (NFFE), a national union representing 100,000 federal government workers, endorses H.R. 949, a bill that would restore meaningful collective bargaining rights to Title 38 VA medical professionals.

Introduced in the House this week by Committee on Veterans' Affairs Chairman Rep. Bob Filner, this bill would amend Section 7422 of Title 38, United States Code, to remove broadly interpreted exceptions concerning the scope of collective bargaining rights. Under Section 7422, applicable employees may negotiate, file grievances and arbitrate disputes over working conditions, except for matters concerning or arising out of professional conduct or competence, peer review, or compensation.

Initially adopted in 1991 as an amendment granting collective bargaining rights to Title 38 employees, the exceptions delineated in Section 7422 have since been broadly interpreted to effectively eliminate them.

“It is positively shameful that a law intended to empower VA health care workers has since been misconstrued to effectively disenfranchise them,” said NFFE National President Richard N. Brown. “This bill will ensure that the women and men who care for our veterans every day get the respect and consideration they deserve in the workplace.”

In the face of chronic staffing shortages and an influx of new patients returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, it is essential that such measures be taken in order to recruit and retain quality employees.

“This bill is significant not just for nurses and doctors at the VA, but also for our injured men and women in uniform,” Brown said. “In order to provide our veterans with the highest-quality care, we must do everything in our power to attract the most talented medical professionals this nation has to offer. Anything less would be a disgrace.”

The VA is at a distinct disadvantage in recruiting compared to private sector medical facilities and even other federal facilities such as the Walter Reed Army Medical Center because of the narrow scope of bargaining imposed on VA health care workers.

“Nurses and doctors in the VA deserve a voice in the workplace just like nurses and doctors in the private sector and in other federal facilities,” said Brown. “It is only in the VA where health care professionals have been singled out. That shouldn't be the case.”

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*Established in 1917, the National Federation of Federal Employees is the oldest union representing civil service federal employees. NFFE currently represents 100,000 federal employees government-wide. NFFE is affiliated with the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers.*