

# P R E S S   R E L E A S E

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 6, 2021

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**\*EVENT AT 10:30AM\***

## Las Vegas Veterans Affairs Union Members to Rally, Deliver Petitions to Local Electeds Demanding Bargaining Rights for All Employees

*Members Have Collected Hundreds of Signatures Asking Electeds to Co-Sponsor VA Employee Fairness Act, Which Would Give Title 38 VA Workers a Voice on the Job*

**Las Vegas, Nv.** - On Friday, August 6, members of the American Federation of Government Employees' National VA Council (AFGE NVAC) - the union representing over 265,000 Veterans Affairs (VA) workers - AFGE Local 1224 will unite in a day of action, delivering petitions to local Senators and Representatives calling on them to co-sponsor the VA Employee Fairness Act. If passed, the Act would grant all VA clinicians, regardless of job title, bargaining rights and a voice on the job.

Title 38 employees include VA physicians, dentists, podiatrists, optometrists, registered nurses, physician assistants, dental auxiliaries and chiropractors - a number of whom were systematically denied bargaining rights by the former presidential administration's VA leadership.

**WHAT:** VA Workers Rally, Deliver Petitions to Local Electeds Calling for Passage of VA Employee Fairness Act

**WHEN:** Friday, August 6, 2021 - 10:30am PT

**WHERE:** 2250 N Las Vegas Blvd. Suite 500  
North Las Vegas, NV 89030

**WHO:** AFGE Local 1224 members  
Local Community Supporters

*\*\*Participating local AFGE members will be available on the ground for media interviews.\*\**

Under United States law 38 USC 7422, all Title 38 employees ought to be granted collective bargaining rights. However, the VA's broad interpretation of this law under the previous administration narrowed the scope of bargaining rights for VA medical professionals, leaving thousands of Title 38 physicians, dentists, and registered nurses unable to bargain for respect, protection and pay.

While the union recently reached a [historic settlement agreement](#) with the Biden administration which will [solve](#) a number of the major issues VA workers have faced for years, workers are demanding that USC 7422 be changed to ensure that this injustice can never happen again under future administrations.

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AFGE National VA Council



The VA Employees Fairness Act would ensure that all VA clinicians and healthcare workers are able to bargain and advocate for the highest quality care for our nation's veterans, without threat of retaliation from local management. Las Vegas workers are coming together in solidarity to demand that local electeds co-sponsor the Bill. The petition outlining their cause has garnered hundreds of signatures to date.

A number of local elected officials - including Representative Steven Horsford - have already agreed to come to the table with the union to discuss the need for this Bill. Workers hope others will follow suit.

### **Background on AFGE NVAC's National Fight for a Fair Contract**

AFGE NVAC's recent [settlement agreement](#) will [solve](#) a number of the major issues VA workers have faced for years, including providing relief to front-line workers who have been denied access to their union representatives, restoring the union rights of VA health care professionals, and resetting the previously adversarial relationship between VA management and the unionized workforce -- a critical step toward good faith bargaining over a new collective bargaining agreement, which will be the largest public sector union contract in the United States when finalized.

Members of AFGE NVAC have been [fighting for a fair contract for years](#), demanding safe working conditions and adequate staffing levels, the space and equipment they need to ensure veterans receive the best care possible, an end to [systemic racism](#) and harassment at the VA, and mechanisms to protect workers from the whims of management.

The importance of a fair contract is a matter of life and death during the COVID-19 pandemic, which has claimed the lives of over [148 VA employees](#) and over [12,763 veterans](#) - making it deadlier for American veterans than the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars combined. Instead of listening to VA workers when they raised the alarm about PPE shortages at the start of the pandemic, Secretary Wilkie and VA officials dismissed them and only acknowledged the shortages once [internal memos were leaked](#).

In January 2021 - nine months into the pandemic - AFGE NVAC released the results of a nationwide survey that revealed the VA has grossly mishandled its COVID-19 response, putting both VA workers and veterans nationwide at risk of contracting the virus. Notably, [60% of respondents](#) reported that their facility did not alert them when fellow staff members contracted COVID-19 and nearly 50% of respondents stated that they were not notified prior to working with COVID-19 positive patients. VA workers need a strong contract in order to protect themselves during future pandemics and national crises of this nature.

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