



March 30, 2017

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader
United States House of Representatives

Dear Speaker Ryan and Leader Pelosi:

On behalf of the Competitive Enterprise Institute (CEI), we write to express support for the Official Time Reform Act of 2017 (H.R. 1364), to prohibit federal employees from conducting political activity on union official time. In addition, the bill calls for federal employees to lose service credit, which counts toward pension and bonuses, if they perform union business for 80 percent or more of the hours in a workday.

Union official time is taxpayer-funded subsidy to federal employee unions that pays for federal employees' salary and benefits while they perform union business, including attending union conventions, lobbying Congress, and filing grievances, instead of the federal work they were hired to do. CEI supports the Official Time Reform Act because federal employees should not conduct political activity on behalf of their unions at the taxpayers' expense. Unions should finance their own political activity with members' dues payments.

According to the latest available data from the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), in FY 2014 official time costs taxpayers \$162.5 million and federal employees spent 3.4 million hours conducting union business instead of their civic duties, but costs are likely much higher than that. A 2014 Government Accountability Office (GAO) report found that the methodology used to calculate official time is unsound. At the agencies GAO investigated, if a proper methodology were used, official time costs are about 15 percent higher than OPM reports.

Like all other individuals or organizations, federal employee unions have the right to lobby government, but they should not do so at the taxpayer's expense. Congress has taken legislative efforts to root out lobbying by federal employees while using tax dollars. It is time to close the loophole that allows federal employees to engage in political activity while being paid by the taxpayer on official time.

Due to poor tracking and reporting of official time, it is unknown how much official time federal employees use to lobby Congress. However, any time spent by federal employees engaging in political activity on the behalf of federal employee unions is too much.

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Political activity performed on official time only serves the interests of unions and their members, not the public. The taxpayer does not receive a direct benefit in return for subsidizing official time. Taxpayers should know that their tax dollars serve a legitimate public purpose, and are not used to subsidize the political activity of federal employee unions.

We urge you and your colleagues in Congress to pass the Official Time Reform Act of 2017 to prohibit federal employees from engaging in political activity while on official time.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Iain Murray
Vice President for Strategy

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Policy Analyst