

May 22, 2018

Dear Senator:

The undersigned labor organizations are writing today to vehemently oppose S. 2372, the VA MISSION Act. Our brothers and sisters at the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) tried to make this bill better; but none of their modest, reasonable changes have been incorporated into this text. As a result, we have no choice but to stand together with frontline employees at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and oppose this legislation.

S. 2372, which passed the House last week, gives the VA Secretary the authority to privatize and dismantle broad swaths of the VA health care system. Sadly, while S. 2372 is titled the VA MISSION Act, it does nothing to help the VA fulfill its mission to veterans. The underlying bill does nothing to help build up internal capacity at the VA and assures that once care and services leave the VA they will not return. This bill outsources primary care to the private sector, authorizes the outsourcing of entire service lines, and fails to address the chronic and prolonged issue of understaffing that is currently plaguing the VA.

What is equally troubling is that included in S. 2372 is the authorization to establish a Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC)-style commission to evaluate the VA's infrastructure needs. This goes much further than prior BRACs that addressed only facility closures through its application to decisions over which facilities to build and repair. This bill also allows the BRAC process to deplete the VA medical services account without restrictions, which is especially troubling given the enormous cost overruns associated with military BRACs.

With that in mind, we must unequivocally oppose S. 2372, the VA MISSION Act. Too much is at stake for veterans, their families and everyone who benefits from the VA's extraordinary accomplishments to succumb to political pressures to hurriedly pass potentially damaging changes with many unknown consequences. We urge you to please vote no when the Senate considers S. 2372, the VA MISSION Act.

American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO)
American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO (AFGE)
Bakery, Confectionary, Tobacco Workers International Union
Association of Flight Attendants-CWA
Maritime Trades Department
IFPTE
AFSCME
UNITE HERE
Department for Professionals Employees
International Union, United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America
United Mine Workers of America
United Steel Workers of America
Professional Aviation Safety Specialists, AFL-CIO (PASS)
National Federation of Federal Employees
Union Veterans Council, AFL-CIO
UFCW International Union
National Association of Letter Carriers