



## AMERICAN FEDERATION OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES, AFL-CIO

**Eugene Hudson, Jr.**  
*National Secretary-Treasurer*

**J. David Cox, Sr.**  
*National President*

**Augusta Y. Thomas**  
*NVP for Women & Fair Practices*

March 7, 2017

Dear Chairman Chaffetz and Ranking Member Cummings:

On behalf of the American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO (AFGE), which represents 700,000 federal and District of Columbia government employees, in approximately 70 agencies, I strongly urge you to oppose the “Official Time Reform Act of 2017,” during the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee legislative markup tomorrow. This legislation would impose a penalty of reduced pension accrual on those who agree to serve as employee representatives. It is yet another attempt by anti-federal employee legislators to eliminate the legitimate use of official time for representational purposes and silence the voice of federal workers.

Official time is not used for union business. Current law prohibits that, and our union adheres scrupulously to that law. Federal employees conduct official agency business while on official time. The use of official time is a longstanding, necessary tool that gives agencies and their employees the means to expeditiously and effectively utilize employee input to address mission-related challenges, as well as bring quick closure to conflicts that arise in all workplaces. The law limits official time to that which the union and the agency both agree is reasonable, necessary, and in the public interest. Therefore, agency officials are able to oversee the use, management, and scheduling of official time based on the immediate needs of the workplace.

The “Official Time Reform Act of 2017” proposes to amend current law and arbitrarily cap the amount of time that can be used per day for official time duties without taking into consideration individual agency working conditions or needs. Further, and most egregious, this legislation proposes to cut federal employees’ retirement, by taking away creditable service for any time spent conducting official representational duties in excess of that cap. This legislation creates a form of micromanaging that will tie the hands of supervisors and agency officials when it comes to scheduling meetings, legal proceedings, and non-official time work for union representatives, ultimately discouraging the use of official time.

We believe that the pension penalty, along with changes in how official time can be used within the federal workplace will effectively eliminate the use of official time. The union would retain the duty of fair representation, but the enormous financial disincentive for employees to serve as union representatives will guarantee that no one will volunteer to serve. It is too steep a price to pay, even for those who would otherwise step forward to help their colleagues in mediation hearings and cases of discrimination, or promoting worker safety, and working with management to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of government.



Federal managers and their employees are fully competent to negotiate the terms of official time, when it is needed, how much is needed, and where it should be used to address unique agency and workplace issues. The “Official Time Reform Act of 2017,” undermines agencies’ ability to assign work, to utilize official time in the most efficient way, and it would prevent agencies from deciding either the schedules or the best use of employee representatives.

It is unconscionable to reduce federal employees’ pensions in an attempt to eliminate the use of official time in the workplace. **Please oppose, the “Official Time Reform Act of 2017.”** If you have any questions, please contact Alethea Predeoux at [alethea.predeoux@afge.org](mailto:alethea.predeoux@afge.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alethea Predeoux', written in a cursive style.

Alethea Predeoux  
Legislative Representative