

National Air Traffic Controllers Association

AFL-CIO

NATCA Urges “NO” Vote on H.R. 1364

On behalf of nearly 19,000 federal employees at the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) represented by the National Air Traffic Controllers Association (NATCA), we strongly urge a NO vote on H.R. 1364, the Official Time Reform Act of 2017. This bill, which was introduced by Rep. Jody Hice (R-GA), would harm the important work that is being done by NATCA and the FAA on NextGen and other programs that require collaboration, programs that are vital to the safety and efficiency of the National Airspace System (NAS). H.R. 1364 aims to reduce the retirement benefits for federal employees, including NATCA representatives, for simply performing their representational duties. Such an attack would seriously constrain NATCA’s ability to use official time for its many critical, legitimate purposes.

Additionally, under H.R. 1364, all-day meetings, such as labor-management workgroup meetings or grievance arbitrations that require NATCA representatives to use official time, would need to be limited to less than 6.5 hours to not run afoul of the bill’s 80% rule. Moreover, any air traffic controller engaged in this capacity would then need to spend the remaining hour-and-a-half of his or her day in a duty status performing duties other than representing employees using official time. However, because the FAA is a nationwide agency, many issues that NATCA representatives handle are regional or national in nature. These meetings and hearings generally take place away from the employee’s air traffic facility. It would be an extremely inefficient use of time and resources if these meetings are cut short and scheduled on additional days in order to comply with the proposed 80% rule.

Official time at the FAA gives employees the ability to resolve disputes, negotiate changes in working conditions, and collaborate on workgroups that implement critical modernization technologies and procedures, such as the Next Generation Air Transportation System (NextGen). These meetings save the FAA and taxpayers both time and money by allowing the parties to avoid costly arbitrations and other less-efficient means of dispute resolution. Official time is also necessary in order for NATCA members to perform their representational duties that are owed to all bargaining unit employees, regardless of union membership status. Labor and management are equally accountable to the taxpayer and have a shared responsibility to ensure that official time is used appropriately.

Without official time, the ability of union and FAA officials to meet informally and resolve issues would be virtually eliminated, requiring them to resolve differences formally - and at a greater cost to the FAA and taxpayers. For example, even if a dispute only affects one radar sector in one area of one facility and could have been resolved through a 10-minute meeting between the area representatives and the supervisor, the case would instead go to arbitration. The cost of arbitrating one case is approximately \$10,000 and that doesn’t include the salary expense for the time spent by the two attorneys the FAA assigns to every case.

NATCA does NOT use official time for any of the following prohibited activities:

- Conduct internal union business
- Recruit new union members
- Collect union dues
- Conduct union elections
- Electioneer for union offices
- Engage in political activity

NATCA Urges Members to OPPOSE H.R 1364

Please contact NATCA Government Affairs staff directly with any questions:

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