



*A bold voice for transportation workers*

## **REJECT ATTACKS ON OFFICIAL TIME FOR FEDERAL EMPLOYEES**

On Wednesday, March 8<sup>th</sup> the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform approved the Official Time Reform Act of 2017 (H.R. 1364) which was introduced by Rep. Jody Hice (R-GA). This misguided legislation would penalize those who agree to serve as employee representatives by reducing pension accrual, and is the most recent in a long history of attempts to eliminate the legitimate use of official time by federal employees for representational purposes.

The use of official time has been an important tool for both labor and management since passage of the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978. Under federal law, elected or volunteer union representatives can be granted official time to perform representational activities during work hours. Official time cannot be used for activities such as organizing or political advocacy, but rather labor-management functions such as collaborative resolution of workplace disputes, coordination of meetings and workgroups, and negotiation and implementation of workplace conditions or new operating procedures. It helps foster a collaborative and healthy work environment that allows our agencies to better serve the American people. By way of example, employees at the Federal Aviation Administration use official time to collaborate with agency officials and provide first-hand input on modernization efforts, such as the implementation of the Next Generation Air Transportation System (NextGen). Contrary to what the proponents of this legislation claim, the appropriate use of official time saves taxpayer dollars by helping federal agencies operate more smoothly, and ultimately help avoid lengthy and costly arbitration or litigation procedures for minor labor-management disputes.

H.R. 1364 would upend the current system by placing an arbitrary cap on the amount of time that can be used per day for official time duties. The legislation fails to account for the varying needs and working conditions at individual agencies. Furthermore, H.R.1364 proposes a direct attack on federal employees' retirement by preventing any time spend in excess of the cap from being counted as creditable hours toward retirement and pension eligibility. Ultimately, this bill would effectively eliminate the use of official time at federal agencies by creating a substantial financial disincentive for employees to serve as an official union representative, and by making the scheduling of official time more cumbersome for supervisors and agency officials. The cost of these changes will be passed on to taxpayers as agencies will lose a valuable tool that enhances their efficiency and effectiveness.

Transportation labor is unified in our opposition to this attack on federal employees. Not only do TTD affiliates represent workers across several federal agencies, but non-federal unions rely on the dedicated public servants at the Department of Transportation, its modal agencies and the Transportation Security Administration to manage a safe and efficient transportation sector. Not only is H.R. 1364 a thinly veiled attempt to curb effective union representation, it is simply bad public policy and must be rejected by Congress.

**Policy Statement No. W17-08  
Adopted March 12, 2017**

**Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO**