CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE
COST ESTIMATE

May 19, 2017

H.R. 1461
VET Protection Act of 2017

As ordered reported by the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs on May 17, 2017

H.R. 1461 would limit the use of official time by employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and would require the department to track the use of such time by its employees. Official time is paid time off from assigned government duties to represent a labor union. As part of their union contracts, VA employees can use part or all of their working day, up to a contractually agreed upon number of hours per year, to work in support of employee unions. Under section 2, no VA employee could dedicate more than 25 percent of their work time to such purposes, and some VA employees would be completely prohibited from using work hours for union related activities. Further, no VA employee would be allowed to use official time to engage in political activities or activities related to lobbying.

VA's agreements with employee unions specify the total number of hours that may be spent on official time rather than the number of people who are authorized to use official time. Thus, CBO expects that under the bill, the number of hours spent on official time would be spread over a larger number of people, but the total hours would not change significantly.

Section 2 also would require VA to track and provide detailed annual reports on the use of official time by department employees. VA is in the process of implementing a new time and attendance system to track the use of official time by VA employees that would meet most of the new requirements. In total, CBO estimates that implementing those provisions would cost less than $500,000 to prepare new regulations and reports over the 2018-2022 period; that spending would be subject to the availability of appropriated funds.

Section 3 would extend the probationary period for certain VA employees, including those appointed to the senior executive service, from one year (or in some cases 18 months) to two years. CBO estimates that implementing section 3 would have no budgetary effect.

Enacting H.R. 1461 would not affect direct spending or revenues; therefore, pay-as-you-go procedures do not apply. CBO estimates that enacting H.R. 1461 would not increase net direct spending or on-budget deficits in any of the four consecutive 10-year periods beginning in 2028.

H.R. 1461 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act and would not affect the budgets of state, local, or tribal governments.

The CBO staff contact for this estimate is Dwayne M. Wright. The estimate was approved by H. Samuel Papenfuss, Deputy Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.