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July 25, 2017

United States Senate
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the three million members of the National Education Association and the 50 million students they serve, we are writing to express our concerns about amendments that could be offered during Wednesday's markup of H.R. 1293. Votes associated with this issue may be included in NEA's Report Card for the 115th Congress.

Specifically, we are concerned about amendments that eliminate or restrict the use of official time, including the:

- Elimination of official time for any activities performed by an employee relating to the internal business of a labor organization, including the solicitation of membership, elections of labor organization officials, and collection of dues
- Elimination of other costs associated with official time activities that are not included in pay, such as travel costs, per diems, office space, equipment, telephone and communications services, supplies, associated interest, and arbitration
- Stipulation that during any pay period, an employee may not be authorized official time in an amount equal to the total time the employee would otherwise be in a duty status during that pay period

Employee representatives use official time to address issues such as working conditions and workplace safety; protect employees from discrimination on the basis of race, gender, age, sexual orientation, and other factors unrelated to job performance; and explore training and educational opportunities. The Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 prohibits the use of official time for union-specific business such as soliciting members, electing officers, internal meetings, and partisan political activities.

Official time is a win for federal agencies, federal employees and, most important, the taxpayers they serve. We urge you to oppose amendments to H.R. 1293 that would cap or eliminate entirely the use of official time for union-related activities.

Sincerely,

Marc Egan
Director of Government Relations
National Education Association