
No Union Time on the Taxpayer's Dime Act

The Civil Service Reform Act, passed in 1978, created the practice now known as “official time,” which allows federal employees to use work hours for union-related activities and to deal with cases before the Federal Labor Relations Authority (FLRA). In essence, official time is paid time off for federal employees to engage in union-related work, bargain unit employees, and engage in activities that advance the cause of a union in lieu of actually working.

Unsurprisingly, the use of official times comes at great cost to the American taxpayer. In 2016, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) reported that federal employees spent 3.6 million hours performing union-related business at a cost of \$177.2 million. Under the Trump Administration, the amount of hours used on official time fell to 2.6 million hours, at a cost of \$134.9 million. Today, however, there is no unified reporting requirement for agencies’ whose employees use official time. As a result, 2019 is the last year of available data on the use of official time. Because federal law provides so few guard rails on the use of official time, federal employees are routinely able to abuse the process and to engage in overtly political activities during work hours, or fail to do their job at all.

The American taxpayer should not be obligated to pay federal employees to engage in union activities. The salaries of federal employees are financed exclusively by the taxpayers, and Americans are therefor right to expect that federal employees will actually be working while collecting a taxpayer-funded salary. Taxpayers should not be obligated to indirectly finance union-related activities that they may not agree with, nor should they be saddled with a bloated federal workforce made up of bureaucrats who are being paid to engage in activities other than their stated duties. Federal employees can engage in union-related activities, if they so choose, on their own time and at their own expense.

Senator Lee’s No Union Time on the Taxpayer’s Dime Act would amend current law (7131 of Title 5 of U.S.C.) to explicitly prohibit the current practice of official time for federal employees. The bill would update current law with the following language:

- *Any activities performed by an employee relating to the business of a labor organization shall be performed during the time the employee is in a non-duty status.*

The No Union Time on the Taxpayer’s Dime Act is yet another example of the work Senator Lee is doing to reign in government spending and hold the federal bureaucracy accountable to the American people they are meant to serve.