



Federal Physicians Association
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September 5, 2017

The Honorable Trey Gowdy
Chairman
House Oversight and Government
Reform Committee
2157 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington DC 20510

The Honorable Elijah E. Cummings
Ranking Member
House Oversight and Government
Reform Committee
2157 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington DC 20510

Dear Chairman Gowdy and Ranking Member Cummings:

The Federal Physicians Association, which represents the 34,000 Medical Officers employed by the federal government, asks that you exempt all Medical Officers from the proposed retirement benefit cuts because of the negative impact the cuts will have on recruiting and retaining Medical Officers.

The federal government's Medical Officers include physicians working to find cures for heart disease, cancer and Alzheimer's disease, to protect the safety of food and drugs, to prevent the spread of infectious disease and to provide medical care to the employees and dependents of the Departments of Defense and State, Native Americans and Veterans.

In August, Congress passed legislation, the VA Choice and Quality Employment Act of 2017, which included a number of provisions to increase hiring of positions with a "severe shortage of candidates." In July 2018, the General Accountability Office released a report which found that in five critical shortage positions, including Medical Officers, the Veterans Health Administration losses increased between FY 2011 and FY 2015. According to exit surveys, most of the losses were from voluntary resignations and retirements.

Also in 2016, the Inspector General for the Department of Justice released a report that documented the shortfalls in medical staffing at the Bureau of Prisons (BOP). BOP has over 300 Medical Officer positions. The IG report found that only 24 of 97 BOP institutions had a medical staffing rate of 90 percent or higher. The Departments of Defense, Health and Human Services, and Veterans Affairs have thousands of current vacancy announcements according to the website federalgovernmentjobs.us.

The August 2017 Congressional Budget Office report, "Options for Changing the Retirement Systems for Federal Civilian Workers," stated that "...changes in FERS that affect workers' current pay or retirement income can affect the government's ability to recruit and retain.

Beginning with the 94th Congress, 1975-1976, and continuing through the 115th Congress, legislation has been passed to counter severe recruitment and retention problems of Medical Officers.



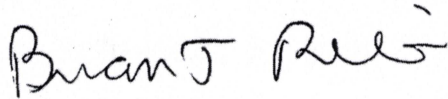
The Title 38 pay provisions that govern VA Medical Officers now apply to the majority of the federal governments Medical Officers.

Cutting the retirement benefits of Medical Officers will reverse the many incentives Congress has legislated to improve recruitment and retention. On behalf of the more than 30,000 Medical Officers, we urge you to exempt them from any proposals which decrease their compensation through cuts in benefits.

If you or your staff require further information, please contact Dennis Boyd, Executive Director of the Federal Physicians Association, dennis@fedphy.org.

Thank you for considering our views.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian J. Ribeiro". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Brian" and last name "Ribeiro" clearly distinguishable.

Brian J. Ribeiro, M.D. F.A.C.P.
President

cc: Members of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee