

MILWAUKEE AREA LABOR COUNCIL

American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations

SERVING MILWAUKEE, OZAUKEE AND WASHINGTON COUNTIES

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Coalition of unions and veterans rally for Milwaukee VA

Members of the Milwaukee Area Labor Council and the local chapter of Veterans for Peace rallied Wednesday to discuss serious concerns about the new Mission Act being implemented tomorrow by the Veterans Administration, on the anniversary of D-Day. "The detrimental effects this plan could have on Wisconsin's veterans need to be widely publicized," Pam Fendt, the labor council president stated. "The federal government is attacking the VA, and that is an attack on veterans themselves."

"For instance, we know VA staff have pioneered groundbreaking treatments for conditions that affect veterans such as traumatic brain injury, spinal cord injuries, and post-traumatic stress. Outsourcing VA healthcare to private providers under the Mission Act could reduce patient volume at the VA and then undermine the special expertise of Veterans Health Administration healthcare," Fendt said. "We are not interested in supporting anything that is a back door to privatization."

Mark Foreman, a member of Veterans for Peace was a Navy corpsman serving with Marines in Vietnam when was seriously wounded and disabled. Foreman has been receiving VA care for 50 years, he said and "it's the best care a veteran could get anywhere, and I fear the Mission Act will undermine the VA system and hurt the quality of care that I and other veterans receive."

"Our council counts numerous veterans from all branches of the armed forces among its members, and we know that 30-40% of the union workers at the VA are veterans themselves," Labor Council President Pam Fendt said at a community/labor rally. "The proposed changes to the VA Master Agreement are a slap in the face to these workers. Cutting 42 articles out of a contract is nobody's idea of a good starting position."

Foreman also addressed the issue of employee rights for the workers at the VA. "As a public teacher for many years, I know that the good work conditions that unions help create are instrumental in achieving the quality care we receive."

The Milwaukee Area Labor Council has heard a number of stories of harassment and termination of workers, especially those active in their unions. We call on leadership to support our veterans and those who care for them.

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Organizing for economic and social justice in the workplace and community



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