

Denis R. McDonough
Secretary of Veterans Affairs
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Rob Shriver
Acting Director
U.S. Office of Personnel Management

Tanya Bradsher
Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Latonia Page
Acting Executive Director, Chief Human Capital
Officers Council
U.S. Office of Personnel Management

Tracey Therit
Chief Human Capital Officer
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Opposing the Proposed Pay Downgrade for Industrial Hygienists at the Department of Veterans Affairs

Rather than downgrading pay, we urge you to maintain or increase the paygrade of industrial hygienists and other key worker health and safety workers at the VA.

Dear Secretary McDonough, Deputy Secretary Bradsher, Ms. Therit, Acting Director Shriver, Acting Executive Director Page:

Recently, we learned that the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is proposing to downgrade the pay of six positions, including Industrial Hygienists (GS-0690-12 and above), covering more than 4,000 workers, many of whom are veterans.

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, representing a diverse array of occupational and environmental health and safety professionals, we strongly recommend that you reconsider this course of action. We understand that this proposal follows consistency reviews designed to reduce geographical pay disparities and hiring times. We also appreciate the pressures VA and other agencies face to keep costs down and use taxpayer dollars effectively. However, the proposed pay downgrade would not accomplish those goals and would instead weaken VA's ability to carry out its missions.

Furthermore, if VA's proposed pay downgrade moves forward, it could inspire other agencies to reduce the pay of industrial hygienists and other occupational and environmental health and safety workers they employ. The likely result of such a scenario would be a weakening of the entire Federal government's ability to protect workers and their communities from health and safety hazards, as it will likely take longer and become harder to find and hire employees for these critical positions; this action runs counter to the intended outcomes of the consistency review process.

Rather than continue along this perilous road, we recommend that you maintain (and consider increasing) the paygrade of industrial hygienists and other key worker health and safety workers at the VA. These highly skilled professionals are a critical element to ensuring

safe workplaces and workers, thus reducing the likelihood of workers comp claims and ensuring business efficiencies.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

[Undersigned Organizations]

AIHA

IHMM