

INSIDE THE AGENCY

HIGHLIGHTS FROM A SURVEY OF CURRENT AND FORMER VA SES ON TITLE 38 PROPOSAL

INTRO >

GAUGING THE IMPACT

The past several years have brought an increase in Congressional and media scrutiny at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), culminating in a number of proposed and implemented legislative actions, including the most recent proposal by VA Secretary Robert McDonald to move the agency's entire career senior executive workforce from Title 5 into Title 38 of the United States Code.

In an effort to engage career executives at the VA, who witness first-hand the challenges within the agency and would directly be affected by this proposal, the Senior Executives Association (SEA) conducted a survey to gauge the perception of impact this proposal would have, as well as the current climate within the Department.

"I went into public service to make a difference in my country, not to make [money]. The trade off of \$50k in salary is outweighed by the certainty that the VA's proposal will lead to destruction of our nation's civil service and will put us on par with third world countries where graft, bribery, and politics permeate the civil service.

HIGHLIGHTS >

A LOOK AT THE SURVEY DATA

236 current and former VA Senior Executives responded to SEA's survey on the VA's proposal.

64% do not support the proposed move to Title 38 – where career executives would have few workplace protections, but an opportunity for an increase in salary.

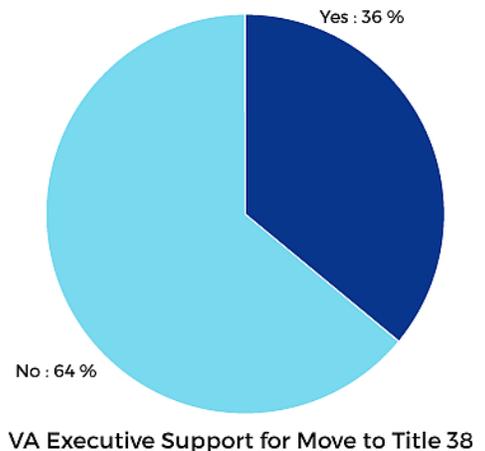
69% do not believe this proposal would improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the delivery of services to veterans.

59% do not believe this proposal will help the agency retain quality Senior Executives.

SEA also asked what could potentially lead to an individual's exit from the federal workforce. Unsurprisingly, frustration with Congress, VA leadership, and fear of unfair media or Congressional scrutiny scored high in this category as being among the top factors leading an executive from considering leaving the federal workforce.

Conversely, almost a third responded that a desire to leave for the private sector would not fuel their decision to seek employment outside of the federal government.

"I am very afraid that having so few protections will stifle almost all creativity, innovation, or risk taking in the VA. No institution can be successful if it is always defensive and averse to change.



TAKEAWAYS >

Respondents to this survey expressed concerns and skepticism that this proposal would neither improve the delivery of services and benefits to our nation's veterans nor increase the VA's ability to attract and retain the exemplary career executive leadership necessary to advance the agency.

SEA will issue more in-depth findings and analysis from the survey next week to aid Congress in its consideration of this proposal.

"Executives are leaving VA not because we don't earn enough money but because of the environment of fear that has been created.