



San Antonio Alamo Area Local Legislative Updates

Letty Alejandro – Legislative Director
LD0195@att.net



Alex Aleman – President, San Antonio Alamo Area Local

Volume 3 No. 1

Jan 10, 2017

Federal employee unions wary of Holman Rule reemergence

Tucked in the 115th Congress's House Rules package approved January 5 is a quintessential throwback measure that has unions leery of the future of federal employee jobs and salaries.

The Holman Rule is a 140 year old measure that allows congress to "retrench" agency spending by allowing amendments to appropriations bill affecting everything from federal employee salaries paid from the Treasury Department to the number of employees in an office.

The Holman Rule was first introduced in 1876 and modified in 1911, but Congress used it sparingly in the 1930s to reduce the numbers of federal employees in specific agencies when it was deemed germane to proposed legislation.

The rule allows congressmen to apply a retrenchment amendment to any appropriation bill without seeking insight from the agencies they propose to cut from, sending an alarm through federal unions whose members could be affected.

The use of the rule would not be simple; a majority of the House and the Senate would still have to approve any such amendment. At the same time, opponents and supporters agree that the work of 2.1 million civil servants, designed to be insulated from politics, is now vulnerable to the whims of elected officials.

Most government workers are represented by unions – unions that conservative Congressmen would very much like to destroy. So in addition to using this rule as a weapon against specific government workers, it is also a weapon of mass destruction to unions.

American Federation of Government Employees President J. David Cox said in a statement that the reinstatement of the rule threatened the financial well-being of federal workers.

"Reviving this rule means lawmakers will be able to vote to cut the pay and jobs of individual workers or groups of workers without getting input from the agencies where these employees work," he said.

"The jobs and paychecks of career federal workers should not be subject to the whims of elected politicians. The Holman Rule will not only harm our hardworking federal workforce, but jeopardize the critical governmental services upon which the American people rely."

Everyone needs to call their Representative and register their objection to this rule.

With the Trump administration's proposed plan of a federal hiring freeze looming, the specificity under which the Holman Rule can be applied left little solace for Cox, who predicted dire consequences for agency operations.

"The so-called Holman Rule undermines civil service protections for the millions of working people who process our Social Security checks, safeguard our borders, support our military, research cures for deadly diseases and carry out programs and services that are vital to our nation."

The Holman Rule will be in place for 2017 before being considered for reauthorization in the next House Rules package next year.