

## Politico

Morning Education

By Michael Stratford | 10/16/2017 10:00 AM EDT

*With help from Caitlin Emma and Mel Leonor*

**WHAT'S NEXT FOR THE VA'S FOR-PROFIT COLLEGE ETHICS POLICY?** The Trump administration, in today's [Federal Register](#), is officially backing away from its plan to exempt all Department of Veterans Affairs employees from a federal law prohibiting them from having a financial interest in or receiving a salary from for-profit colleges. The VA [announced](#) last week that it would abandon the planned change in policy after it garnered stiff opposition from dozens of national veterans organizations, consumer groups, ethics experts, and some Senate Democrats. Letters from many of those groups were still pouring in during the past several days, ahead of today's deadline for public feedback on the proposal.

- **A VA spokesman said last week that the agency** was dropping its initial proposal "to allow proper consideration" of the input it has received. Here's a look at what various groups would like to see if the VA moves ahead with a revised rule:

- **Consumer and education groups** [said](#) they want waivers from the federal requirement to be done on "a case-by-case basis." They wrote that in "no circumstances should employees who work on GI Bill issues be allowed to receive payments from colleges, and, to avoid real or perceived bias or endorsement, in no circumstances should any high-level VA employees be allowed to receive payments."

- **The union representing Department of Veterans Affairs employees** [said](#) it wants a seat at the table "in the drafting of future rule changes to ensure that VA employees are fully protected from possible manipulation by for-profit colleges in pursuit of veterans and the GI Bill."

- **Ethics experts Norm Eisen, who served as Obama's top White House ethics lawyer, and Richard Painter, who served as George W. Bush's top White House ethics lawyer, also** [urged](#) the VA to require any employees taking classes at for-profit schools to pay the fair market value of those classes to avoid exploding "a VA employee's sense of indebtedness to help the school identify veterans for purposes of obtaining their GI Bill benefits."

- **A coalition of veterans' groups** [said](#) that any revised policy should prohibit VA employees taking classes at for-profit schools from accepting "tuition discounts or other favors that might leave the employees vulnerable to requests from the college to help recruit veterans or influence the college's access to GI Bill funds." In addition, they said, the VA should not allow employees to take jobs at for-profit colleges where their job duties "involve the opportunity to steer veterans towards a college or influence its access to GI Bill funds."