

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 6, 2025

The Honorable Doug Collins
Secretary
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We write to express our extreme concern regarding reports that through its Agency Reductions in Force (RIF) and Reorganization Plan (ARRP), the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) plans to cut its staff by an estimated 83,000 employees by the end of this fiscal year.¹ VA Chief of Staff Christopher Syrek stated in a March 4, 2025, memorandum to key VA officials that the “initial objective” at the agency will be to reduce the VA workforce to end of fiscal year 2019 levels. This planned RIF and ARRP, coupled with the ongoing hiring freeze and illegal terminations of probationary employees, will be catastrophic for the agency; its workforce; and for the veterans, caregivers, and survivors it serves.

Congress passed the Honoring Our PACT Act in 2022, which authorized the largest expansion of veterans’ benefits in decades.² Millions of veterans either became newly eligible for VA benefits or saw their benefits increase due to authorities in the PACT Act. To meet the growth in demand and to deliver the care and benefits veterans earned, Congress included provisions in the legislation that allowed VA to grow its workforce across the system. Those new hires were not limited to clinicians who provide direct care. Claims processors, benefits counselors, IT professionals, and essential support staff were also onboarded to ensure veterans could access their earned disability compensation and programs like the G.I. Bill and Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E). These new hires made the Department more efficient and productive, and the reduction in claims processing turnaround can be directly attributed to the growth in the workforce. Returning to pre-PACT levels explicitly goes against congressional intent.

You have promised on several occasions that any reductions in the VA workforce will not impact delivery of care and benefits to veterans. It defies logic and reason that the agency could cut an additional 83,000 employees, beyond the 2,400 or more you have already terminated, without healthcare and benefits being interrupted. To that end and due to the urgency of this matter, we request answers to the following questions by 10:00 a.m. ET on **March 12, 2025**. We also request our staff be briefed on these RIF and ARRP plans by **March 10, 2025**.

1. Please provide full and unredacted copies of the information gathered and submitted by Administrations and Staff Offices that is due by March 10, 2025, as referenced in the March 4, 2025, memorandum related to the proposed RIF and ARRP.

¹Eric Katz, *VA Plans to Lay Off as Many as 83,000 Employees This Year*, Government Executive (March 4, 2025).

²Pub. L. No. 117-168 (2022).

2. Please provide the names, job titles, job duties, and onboarding dates of the “DOGE leads” and “VA liaisons to DOGE” referenced in the March 4, 2025, memorandum.
3. Please provide a detailed list of VA Administration and Staff Office personnel who will be detailed to support the RIF and ARRP efforts, as referenced in the March 4, 2025, memorandum. Please include the following data: name, occupation, job description, work experience, job location, length of VA service, and other relevant information.
4. Please provide a detailed timeline of the proposed RIF and ARRP plans, including all due dates for information from VA Administrations and Staff Offices and dates on which each step in the RIF and ARRP plan will be executed.
5. Please provide a list of the designated senior leaders who will serve as central points of contact for time sensitive issues designated by Administration and Staff Offices as referenced in the March 4, 2025, memorandum.
6. Please provide a list of Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, other Key Officials, Senior Advisors, DOGE liaisons, and any other personnel who will serve on the Executive Review Group (ERG) referenced in the March 4, 2025, memorandum.
7. Please provide a list of participants and detailed summary of the initial senior level meeting chaired by the Secretary that is planned for March 5, 2025, as referenced in the March 4, 2025, memorandum.
8. In the March 4, 2025, memorandum, the VA Chief of Staff states, “...the Department’s initial objective is to return to 2019 end-strength numbers of 399,957 employees.” What future objectives related to any RIFs or adjustments to VA staffing levels are being contemplated or planned?
9. In the March 4, 2025 memorandum, the Chief of Staff refers to 2019 numbers as 399,957 employees, but according to data reported as required by Section 505 of Public Law 115-82, the MISSION Act, the Department’s numbers were below that level until 2020. Please confirm the exact data and goals you’ll be referencing as you implement these plans.

Should you have any questions about this request, you may contact my office.

Sincerely,



Mark Takano
Ranking Member
House Committee on
Veterans' Affairs



Richard Blumenthal
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on
Veterans' Affairs

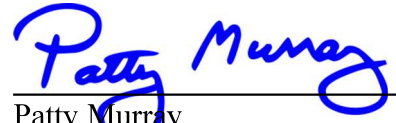
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Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Ranking Member
House Appropriations
Subcommittee on Military
Construction, Veterans
Affairs, and Related Agencies



Patty Murray
United States Senator



Julia Brownley
Member of Congress



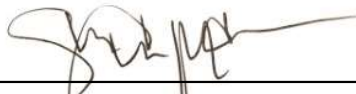
Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Chris Pappas
Member of Congress



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick
Member of Congress



Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



Morgan McGarvey
Member of Congress



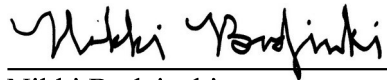
Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



Delia C. Ramirez
Member of Congress



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Nikki Budzinski
Member of Congress



Ruben Gallego
United States Senator



Timothy M. Kennedy
Member of Congress



Elissa Slotkin
United States Senator



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Member of Congress



Herbert C. Conaway, Jr.
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Kelly Morrison
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