

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 6, 2025

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

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

Dear President Trump and Secretary Collins:

We write today to call into question President Trump's series of egregious Executive Orders and other illegal actions in coordination with unelected co-president Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), and with unquestioning execution by Secretary Collins, that have had increasingly detrimental impacts on the Veteran community and continue to create capability gaps that threaten the well-being of Veterans. The indiscriminate purge of Veterans and other federal employees at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) means slower claims processing, longer wait times for Veterans seeking access to their medical care and the end of important research that benefits Veterans and all Americans. We demand that you take accountability for these actions and share with the American people what exactly the plan is for the future of VA.

Just last week, the VA announced a second wave of mass terminations, totaling 1,400 employees, claiming in the announcement that these are "non-mission critical" positions and exclude the Veterans Crisis Line (VCL) – though we have already learned of at least two cases that prove this claim wrong. We challenge this disregard for the important work of the entire VA ecosystem that provides comprehensive and timely care and benefits to our Veterans, and we have yet to learn about a day-after plan that explains how exactly VA will function with so many sudden and senseless cuts. Claiming that only those who answer the phones at VCL are essential is an insult to the service and commitment to Veterans of the many dedicated employees who ensure that someone is ready to listen and help in a moment of crisis. We are shocked that Secretary Collins, who claimed that one of his top priorities as VA Secretary would be to address Veteran suicide, would participate in such a cynical cover-up for the Trump administration's error— not only by going along with the lies, but also justifying them.

Nearly 6,000 Veterans across the federal government have been terminated to date. Among the most patriotic people in our Nation, Veterans make up 30 percent of the federal workforce, which is a true reflection of their exceptional dedication to our country. Yet, their President will not even publicly acknowledge his error of judgment in allowing Elon Musk unfettered access across federal agencies in his quest to dismantle their critical contributions that save lives and

deliver essential services. Instead, he quietly rehired certain mission-critical VA positions that never should have been terminated and brushed off the significant impact that this indiscriminate mass firing would have on morale, workflow and ability of the Department to deliver critical services to Veterans in a timely manner.

We demand that you respond to the following questions no later than March 12, 2025, and that this information be made available to the public, and particularly Veterans, who are owed accountability and transparency from the administration that represents them.

1. Please provide a list detailing, by job category, how many VA employees were terminated during the February 13, 2025, dismissal of 1,000 VA employees, as well as the February 24, 2025, dismissal of an additional 1,400 VA employees.
 - a. How many of these employees are Veterans themselves? Please provide a numeric breakdown by job category and duty station.
 - b. How many of these employees are disabled Veterans? Please provide a numeric breakdown by job category and duty station.
 - c. How many of these employees were eligible for Veterans' preference? Please provide a numeric breakdown by job category and duty station.
 - d. How many of these employees were on probationary status because they had just been promoted? Please provide a numeric breakdown by job category and duty station.
 - e. What is the administration's plan, if any, to assist these dismissed Veterans with obtaining employment elsewhere? Has the administration considered how these terminations may increase the risk of Veteran homelessness?
 - f. How many of these employees were military spouses? Please provide a numeric breakdown by job category and duty station.
2. How many employees working for the VCL received notice of dismissal on February 13, 2025? Have all dismissed VCL employees been reinstated?
 - a. If all dismissed VCL employees have not been reinstated, why not? How many positions remain open, and what are the functions of these positions?
 - b. Assuming these dismissals were accidental, what error led to these employees being wrongfully terminated? Has this error been addressed in the evaluation process?
3. How many employees working for the VCL received notice of dismissal on February 24, 2025? Have all dismissed VCL employees been reinstated?

- a. If all dismissed VCL employees have not been reinstated, why not? How many positions remain open, and what are the functions of these positions?
 - b. Assuming these dismissals were accidental, what error led to these employees being wrongfully terminated? Has this error been addressed in the evaluation process?
4. Do you acknowledge that all employees working for the VCL, including and not limited to phone operators, are critical to its mission to ensure that at-risk Veterans receive the assistance they need?
5. Can you provide a justification for the numerous public reports that describe terminations of probationary employees despite positive evaluations by their respective management?
6. What analysis is used, if any, to ensure that disabled Veterans using their Veterans' Preference are not wrongfully wrapped into the administration's attack on probationary employees?
7. Can you please describe, in detail, DOGE's evaluation process in determining cuts to VA employment? What checks are in place to ensure that these cuts do not continue to harm critical programs that provide care and benefits, including mental health services, to Veterans?
8. What was the total cost spent by the U.S. government on recruiting and training the VA employees who have since been fired by DOGE?
9. What is the administration's plan to swiftly address postponements and cancellations of suicide prevention training sessions, health care appointment cancellations and new clinic opening delays?
 - a. Please provide a list of programs and services that have been cancelled or delayed since February 13, 2025.
 - b. Please include the number of Veterans or VA employees impacted by these cancellations and delays.
10. How exactly will the claimed savings as a result of the mass terminations at VA be redirected back toward health care, benefits and services for VA beneficiaries?
 - a. Please provide an itemized list of savings in dollar amounts by account, and for each amount, specify whether these are mandatory or appropriated funds.
 - b. Please provide your spend plan for savings that you claim to recoup through these terminations. Which accounts do you intend to redirect these funds to, and which new services would these funds provide?

- c. For each of these proposed changes, specify whether you have the legal authority to reprogram these funds in the way intended.
11. Regarding the February 22, 2025, emails sent to all federal employees requiring an explanation of tasks completed the week prior, what exactly will be done with this information?
 - a. Did all Veterans Crisis Line employees receive this email?
 - b. Did all physicians and nurses employed in VA hospitals receive this email?
 - c. Who is reading and analyzing responses to this email?
 - d. Are responses being used to determine future layoffs or personnel changes?
12. What analysis – if any – did the U.S. Office of Personnel Management conduct to examine the impact terminations or resignations resulting from this email would have on critical services across government?

Our Veterans deserve honest and transparent answers. As a reminder, the American public elected President Trump into office to represent their best interests, and the actions of the VA Secretary are a direct reflection of President Trump's leadership and priorities. Our Veterans' interests should always come before any selfish agenda, and actions that impact their access to care and benefits should require immense scrutiny prior to implementation. We believe this close review has not been conducted, as evidenced by the VA's scramble to rehire mission-critical positions such as VCL employees.

We stand ready and willing to reach across the aisle for the best interests of our Veterans – a sentiment that Secretary Collins will recall from his hearing before the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee. Support to our Veterans has historically been a bipartisan issue, and we do not want this long-standing tradition to fall because of a President and his VA Secretary turning their backs on our Veterans due to the influence of an unelected co-president who yields illegal privilege to invoke Executive authorities. He fools no one with his efforts to line the pockets of the wealthy, and we will not stand by while there is an active attack against our Nation's Veterans.

President Trump, Secretary Collins – we urge you to uphold with integrity your commitment to our Nation's Veterans.

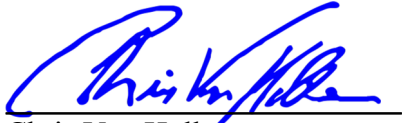
Sincerely,



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



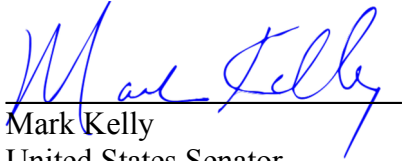
Alex Padilla
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Tina Smith
United States Senator



Mark Kelly
United States Senator