

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 19, 2025

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

Dear Secretary Collins:

Last week, we were outraged by the Administration's abrupt and indiscriminate termination of tens of thousands of workers across almost every government agency, including more than 1,000 Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) employees. We were further disturbed by the manner in which you publicly celebrated this reprehensible announcement – a clear departure from the assurances provided throughout your confirmation process to never “balance budgets on the back of veterans' benefits” and to always “put the veteran first.” Not only will this latest action put veterans' care and benefits at risk, but it further confuses, demoralizes, and threatens a VA workforce we need to fulfill our nation's sacred promise to our veterans and their families who have already sacrificed so much.

The more than 1,000 VA employees whose lives and careers you have upended included a substantial number of veterans and military spouses. Many had exemplary performance records. Because probationary employees tend to be younger, many of them represented the next generation of VA employees – talented men and women who chose a long-term career path of serving veterans. VA already invested in recruiting and training these individuals because veterans deserve the very best staff possible. And they all deserved better than to be casually discarded by an Administration that places a greater priority on political loyalty than fitness to serve.

You have repeatedly claimed these massive, arbitrary staff terminations – done without advance consultation with service-level leadership or advisement from experienced senior leaders trained to manage VA's health care, benefits, and memorial workforce — “will not negatively impact VA health care, benefits or beneficiaries.” However, we have heard directly from VA employees and veterans across the country that this is absolutely not the case. In fact, we have been made aware of numerous detrimental developments as a direct result of the actions of this Administration. Openings for new clinics have been delayed because VA cannot hire the necessary staff to open their doors. Service lines at VA hospitals and clinics have been halted. Beds and operating rooms at VA facilities have been suspended. Support lines for caregivers have been reduced. Veterans Crisis Line employees have been fired, and suicide prevention training sessions have been postponed or canceled. And transportation options for disabled veterans, which help ensure veterans can attend regular health care appointments, have been cut back because volunteer drivers are now unable to get credentialed.

The list of real-life negative impacts of this Administration's directives is expansive and growing every day. Rather than putting the interests of veterans first, you made your priorities abundantly clear in your statement applauding the mass firings: "At VA, we are focused on saving money." It's clear from the slashing of services and benefits this priority is coming directly at the expense of veterans.

With the best interests of veterans in mind, and to ensure VA is capable of carrying out its sacred obligation of behalf of veterans, we urge you to immediately reinstate all of the employees dismissed in the latest indiscriminate terminations and commit to VA employees and veterans that no additional widespread terminations will occur without advanced notification to Congress, a detailed justification, coordination with service-level leadership, and an appropriate assessment of potential impacts on veterans' health care and benefits. Congress remains ready to collaborate with you, if you are willing to come to the table and put the needs of our veterans above all else.

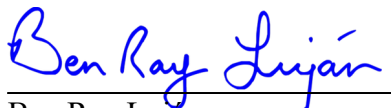
Sincerely,



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Jacky Rosen
United States Senator



Ben Ray Lujan
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Ruben Gallego
United States Senator



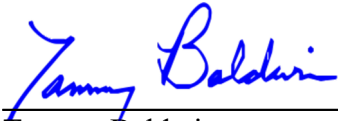
Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



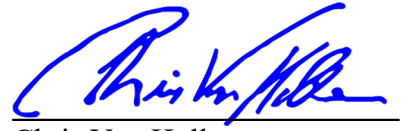
Gary C. Peters
United States Senator



Adam B. Schiff
United States Senator



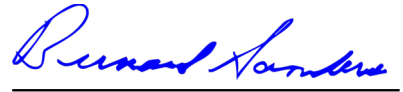
Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



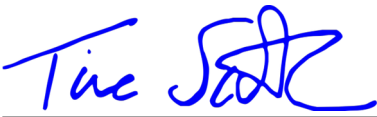
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United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



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Tina Smith
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Jeanne Shaheen
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Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator



Elissa Slotkin
United States Senator



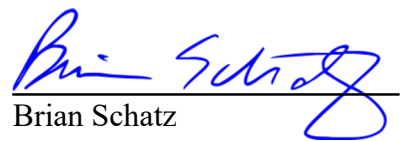
Lisa Blunt Rochester
United States Senator



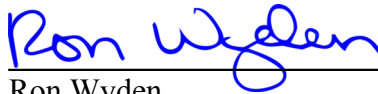
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Amy Klobuchar
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United States Senator



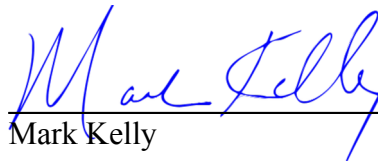
Mark R. Warner
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Andy Kim
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Angela Alsobrooks
United States Senator



Mark Kelly
United States Senator



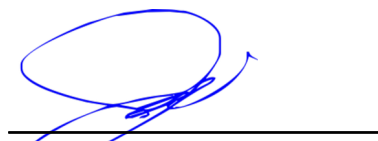
Jeffrey A. Merkley
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