



**THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS  
WASHINGTON**

May 2, 2025

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Vice Chair  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Murray:

Thank you for your February 24, 2025, letter to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) regarding the impact of the Federal hiring freeze on VA research and research programs.

My commitment to Veterans and VA is steadfast. Everything we do is in pursuit of ensuring Veterans receive the benefits and services they deserve, and instilling a lasting culture of caring, customer service, and accountability at VA that focuses on always putting Veterans first.

To ensure all mission-critical VA research efforts continue uninterrupted, VA has extended, for an additional 90 days, the terms of research employees whose appointments are due to expire within the next 90 days. This extension will ensure continuity of all VA research efforts while the Department conducts a comprehensive assessment of ongoing research initiatives to evaluate their impact on Veteran health care.

As it has always done, VA reviews its research projects on a case-by-case basis before deciding whether to extend, renew, or convert existing employees to a new appointment. Approvals for initial project funding and, therefore, subsequent hiring actions, are merit based. VA is working to finalize a list of hiring freeze exemptions for research positions to ensure the below projects and other high-priority research efforts proceed uninterrupted:

- The Million Veteran Program.
- The Scott Hannon Initiative for Precision Mental Health.
- Research in cancer, specifically for precision oncology.
- Research relating to toxic military exposures.
- VA clinical trials, including the Cooperative Studies Program National Brain Banks—Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy, Alzheimer's disease, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, and other priority research that benefit Veterans.
- Support for Research Infrastructure

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The Honorable Patty Murray

Even as VA works to streamline and redirect resources, we have not veered from our Veteran-centric mission and our unwavering commitment to put Veterans first.

VA continues to take multiple steps to ensure all mission-critical positions are exempt from the Federal hiring freeze, so VA benefits and services are not impacted:

- In collaboration with the White House and the Office of Personnel Management, VA exempted more than 300,000 essential positions from the hiring freeze. These positions provide health care and other vital services.
- For additional flexibility, VA created a process that Department leaders with pressing hiring needs can use to request additional exceptions to the hiring freeze.

Our focus remains on ensuring that our Veterans continue to receive the care and services they deserve without disruption. We appreciate your understanding and continued support during this time.

Thank you for your continued support of the Nation's Veterans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Collins', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Douglas A. Collins

Cc: The Honorable Richard Blumenthal