



**THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS  
WASHINGTON**

May 5, 2025

The Honorable Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Blumenthal:

Thank you for your February 4 and 19, 2025, and March 10, 2025, co-signed letters to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) regarding VA employee terminations. I am also responding to your February 27, 2025, co-signed letter that you addressed to President Donald J. Trump regarding VA employee terminations and VA's Reduction in Force. I appreciate the opportunity to respond to your letters.

President Trump gave me simple instructions when he offered me the role of Secretary. He told me to take great care of Veterans. As such, everything I do is to ensure Veterans receive the care and services they deserve and instill a lasting culture of caring, customer service, and accountability at VA that always puts Veterans first. I am equally committed to supporting the American people's mandate for President Trump to eliminate waste, bloat, and insularity to empower American families, workers, taxpayers, and our system of government.

President Trump has a mandate for generational change in Washington. We owe our Veterans and VA employees solutions to make VA more efficient, accountable, and transparent. VA will always fulfill its duty to provide Veterans, families, caregivers, and survivors with the health care and benefits they have earned. VA also will continue to hire more than 300,000 mission critical positions to ensure health care and benefits for VA beneficiaries are not impacted.

Improving services for the Veterans is why VA exists. Measuring VA's progress by how much money it spends and how many people it employs, rather than by how many Veterans it helps, is over. The Federal Government does not exist to employ people, it exists to serve people. VA's biggest problem is that its bureaucracy and inefficiencies are getting in the way of customer convenience and service to Veterans.

On February 13, 2025, and on February 24, 2025, VA terminated probationary employees. VA worked to ensure the responsibilities of these positions were covered by other staff and if any of these positions qualified for an exemption from termination. There has been no negative impact on the health care and benefits that VA provides to Veterans.

VA took multiple steps to ensure all positions essential to the mission were exempt from the Federal hiring freeze and probationary terminations, so VA benefits and services were not impacted. They include the following:

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- VA leaders could request that employees be exempt from probationary termination.
- Hiring continued for more than 300,000 positions exempted from the Federal hiring freeze and probationary terminations because they provide Veterans health care and other vital services.
- For additional flexibility, VA also created a process for Department leaders with pressing hiring needs to request additional exemptions to the Federal hiring freeze.

VA is complying with applicable court orders related to probationary employees. I cannot comment further due to pending litigation.

In conclusion, we will reform the Department without making cuts to health care or benefits to Veterans and VA beneficiaries. VA will always fulfill its duty to provide Veterans, families, caregivers, and survivors with the timely and high-quality health care and benefits they have earned.

I provided the other cosigners of your letters with a courtesy copy of this response. 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 Jacky Rosen  
The Honorable Ben Ray Luján  
The Honorable Elizabeth Warren  
The Honorable Ruben Gallego  
The Honorable Sheldon Whitehouse  
The Honorable Gary C. Peters  
The Honorable Adam Schiff  
The Honorable Tammy Baldwin  
The Honorable Chris Van Hollen  
The Honorable Richard J. Durbin  
The Honorable Bernard Sanders  
The Honorable Cory A. Booker  
The Honorable Tammy Duckworth  
The Honorable Tina Smith

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Cc: The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen  
The Honorable Charles E. Schumer  
The Honorable Elissa Slotkin  
The Honorable Lisa Blunt Rochester  
The Honorable Jack Reed  
The Honorable Martin Heinrich  
The Honorable Brian Schatz  
The Honorable Ron Wyden  
The Honorable Tim Kaine  
The Honorable Kristen Gillibrand  
The Honorable Amy Klobuchar  
The Honorable Mazie Hirono  
The Honorable Mark R. Warner  
The Honorable Andy Kim  
The Honorable Angela Alsobrooks  
The Honorable Mark Kelly  
The Honorable Jeffrey A. Merkley  
The Honorable Peter Welch  
The Honorable Raphael Warnock  
The Honorable John Fetterman  
The Honorable Michael F. Bennet  
The Honorable John Hickenlooper  
The Honorable Catherine Cortez Masto  
The Honorable Maria Cantwell  
The Honorable Alex Padilla