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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515-6015

February 27, 2025

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The Honorable Douglas A. Collins
Secretary
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Collins,

The recent firing of over 2,400 employees at VA, which likely includes veterans and military spouses, without prior notification to Congress is alarming and unacceptable. I am writing to remind the Department of its duty to comply with the constitution and to follow the law.

Article I of the Constitution vests the power of the purse with Congress and provides no power to the President, or a member of his cabinet, to impound funds. To ensure that funds are spent according to Congressional direction, the annual Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act includes a series of transfer and reprogramming provisions along with requests for operating plans that are subject to the approval of Congress. Specifically, within the Departmental Administration account, "The Committees direct the Secretary to provide a spend plan on how the Department allocates the General Administration funding by office to the Committees within 30 days of enactment of this Act. The Secretary may alter these allocations if the Committees have been notified and written approval is provided." The firing of these employees is a clear change in your operating plan, but our committee did not receive any notification or request for approval.

Additionally, in your press releases announcing the firings, you state that you will save \$181 million and alluded to using these funds for other purposes. The law requires you to notify Congress before reprogramming these funds. I urge you to commit to full transparency and work with our committee to reallocate these resources appropriately. If these funds have already been reallocated, I urge you to detail to the committee how these funds were repurposed.

As you continue to make staffing changes at VA, I want to remind you of the following administrative provision included in the annual appropriations act: “The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall provide written notification to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress 15 days prior to organizational changes which result in the transfer of 25 or more full-time equivalents from one organizational unit of the Department of Veterans Affairs to another.” I fully expect to be notified of any major changes in VA’s staffing and organizational structure.

The recent attempt to cancel nearly \$2 billion in VA contracts is also alarming and unacceptable. This is an attempt to impound funds and is a clear violation of the Impoundment Control Act. These appropriated funds provide direct services to veterans across the country and support our shared effort to improve the delivery of benefits, health care, and ensure the safety of our veterans. I understand that these cancellations are now under review and I urge you to take the time to learn the value and impact of these contracts instead of hastily endangering our veterans with indiscriminate, unlawful service eliminations without congressional involvement and approval.

Ultimately, my goal is to ensure that our veterans are fully supported and that services to them, their families, caregivers, and survivors are not impacted by draconian and arbitrary decisions to fire staff and freeze funding for vital programs. I want to remind you that the annual appropriations act includes a provision that states, “None of the funds made available in this Act may be used in a manner that would increase wait times for veterans who seek care at medical facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs.” It is important that a reduction in staff and services do not impact a veteran’s ability to obtain health care or other benefits promised to them.

Finally, our office has been unable to obtain any details about the employees that were fired or the contracts under consideration for cancellation. Please respond to the following questions by March 7, 2025:

1. Please provide an analysis that shows how firing 2,400+ probationary employees equate to \$181 million in savings. Please include the total number of employees fired along with their job titles, and expected savings by account, office, and administration.
2. Please provide a plan for how VA expects to reallocate the \$181 million. If this funding has already been reallocated, please provide an accounting of how these funds were reallocated.
3. Please provide a demographic breakdown of those fired to include veteran status, military spouse status, gender, race, and location by state.
4. Please provide a list of all contracts under consideration for cancellation to include the recipient, the service provided, veteran status of the recipient, value of the contract, location of the services provided by the contract, and a justification for why the contract is being considered for cancellation.

I look forward to your responses.

Sincerely,



Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on
Military Construction and Veterans
Affairs