

**Congress of the United States**  
Washington, DC 20510

January 25, 2017

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

Dear President Trump:

We are deeply troubled that your freeze on the hiring of federal civilian employees will have a negative and disproportionate impact on our nation's veterans. As such, we urge you to take stock of this hiring freeze's effect on our nation's veterans and exempt the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) as well as any veterans seeking federal employment from your Memorandum Regarding the Hiring Freeze.

While there can be no debate that the federal government, including VA, should be more efficient in its delivery of services to all Americans, a hiring freeze at VA will delay veterans' access to health care and resolution of their disability claims, which for many of our nation's heroes provides a sole source of income to them and their families. Our nation's veterans should not be made to sacrifice any more than they already have while you review federal hiring.


Have you considered how this hiring freeze will affect VA's ability to provide veterans with access to health care? For years, VA has faced chronic medical personnel shortages, particularly in rural areas. As a result of the hiring freeze, the Department's inability to hire clinicians and the administrative support teams to schedule appointments will have a direct impact on the number of veterans on waiting lists at facilities across the country. Further, this will have an impact on community providers, who will be forced to continue waiting for delayed payments without VA having the ability to hire employees to process payments on their claims. We urge you to re-evaluate this hiring freeze and take into account veterans who will face increased delays in accessing health care.

Have you considered how this hiring freeze will affect VA's ability to provide veterans with decisions on their appeals for disability compensation? More than 450,000 appeals are pending – that means that more than 450,000 veterans are waiting for the U.S. government to provide them with benefits earned while a disability was incurred while serving in our armed services. Our nation's veterans cannot afford an unnecessary wait to receive the benefits they have earned serving our country. We urge you to re-evaluate this hiring freeze and take into account the effect it will have on veterans who will have to wait longer for earned benefits -- whether it's disability, survivor or education benefits, or whether it's vocational rehabilitation or job training services.

Have you considered how this hiring freeze will impact those veterans who apply to federal jobs? Veterans comprise 31 percent of the federal workforce and most receive a well-earned hiring preference when they apply for federal jobs. An across-the-board freeze will hurt these veterans – many of whom are transitioning from military to civilian service, and many of whom are disabled. The negative impacts of this freeze will be felt across the country and disproportionately affect those men and women who have honorably served in our military.

Should you move forward with this hiring freeze, one issue that must not be overlooked is VA's little-known mission of providing support to national efforts to prepare for, respond to, and recover from natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and man-made catastrophes. We urge you to classify VA's delivery of health care as a national security and public safety responsibility, as outlined in your Presidential Memorandum Regarding Hiring Freeze, and exempt it from this hiring freeze. To do otherwise is to jeopardize the national security and public safety of our nation.

Mr. President, this hiring freeze will have a dramatic impact on the quality of health care and benefits veterans receive. We urge you to reconsider.



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Jon Tester  
United States Senate



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Tim Walz  
United States House of Representatives



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Brian Schatz  
United States Senate



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Mark Takano  
United States House of Representatives



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Patty Murray  
United States Senate



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Julia Brownley  
United States House of Representatives



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Bernard Sanders  
United States Senate




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Ann McLane Kuster  
United States House of Representatives




  
Sherrod Brown  
United States Senate


  
Beto O'Rourke  
United States House of Representatives

  
Mazie K. Hirono  
United States Senate

  
Kathleen Rice  
United States House of Representatives

  
Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senate


  
J. Luis Correa  
United States House of Representatives

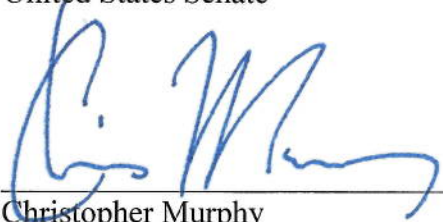
  
Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senate

  
Patrick J. Leahy  
United States Senate

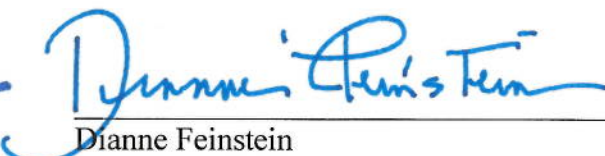
  
Jack Reed  
United States Senate

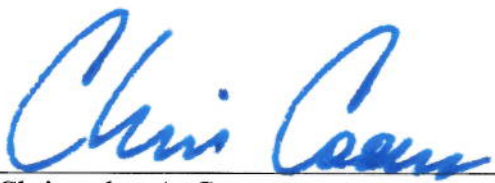
  
Tom Udall  
United States Senate

  
Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senate

  
Christopher Murphy  
United States Senate

  
Maria Cantwell  
United States Senate

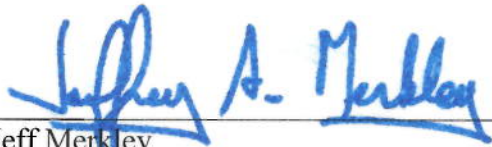
  
Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senate



Christopher A. Coons  
United States Senate



Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senate



Jeff Merkley  
United States Senate



Catherine Cortez Masto  
United States Senate



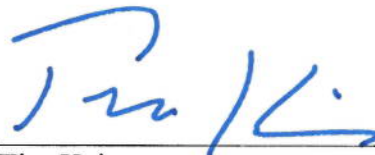
Debbie Stabenow  
United States Senate



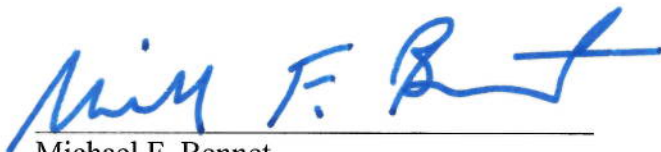
Al Franken  
United States Senate



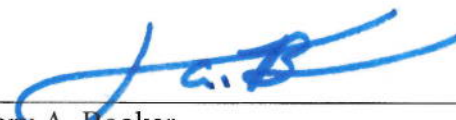
Charles E. Schumer  
United States Senate



Tim Kaine  
United States Senate



Michael F. Bennet  
United States Senate



Cory A. Booker  
United States Senate



Gary C. Peters  
United States Senate



Claire McCaskill  
United States Senate



Thomas R. Carper  
United States Senate



Robert Menendez  
United States Senate



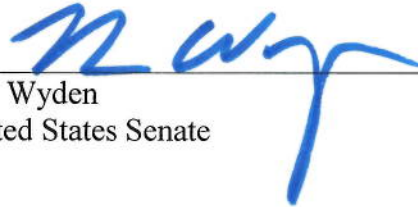
Mark R. Warner  
United States Senate



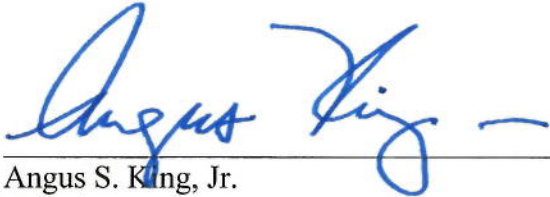
Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senate



Martin Heinrich  
United States Senate



Ron Wyden  
United States Senate



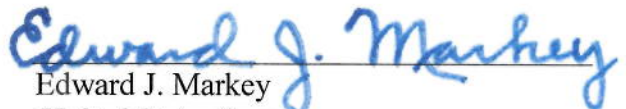
Angus S. King, Jr.  
United States Senate



Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senate



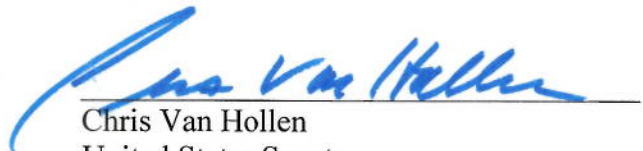
Bill Nelson  
United States Senate



Edward J. Markey  
United States Senate




Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senate



Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senate





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Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senate




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Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senate



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Sheldon Whitehouse  
United States Senate



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Heidi Heitkamp  
United States Senate




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Kamala D. Harris  
United States Senate




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Margaret Wood Hassan  
United States Senate



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Robert P. Casey, Jr.  
United States Senate



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Joe Donnelly  
United States Senate



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Joe Manchin III  
United States Senate