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Congress of the United States
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COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
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HOUSE VETERANS' AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY
SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS

REGIONAL WHIP, NEW YORK STATE

CO-CHAIR, NORTHERN BORDER CAUCUS

August 5, 2025

The Honorable Douglas A. Collins
Secretary
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Ave NW
Washington, D.C. 20420

Secretary Collins,

I write with extreme concern regarding the high number of departures of mission-essential jobs that appear to be connected to the Trump administration's executive orders on reducing the federal workforce, and request detailed, individual workforce data to assess the impact of the VA's workforce reduction policies in Western New York.

In March, the House Committee on Veterans Affairs discovered through a leaked memorandum that the Department would seek to eliminate more than 80,000 positions, reducing the VA workforce to pre-PACT Act levels, which you confirmed to national media. In July, you reversed course on the administration's plan to reduce the workforce from more than 80,000 to 30,000 by the end of the fiscal year. This means that in addition to the 17,000 employees you have already cut, you plan to reduce VA's workforce by more than 12,000 by September 30th.

In May, you testified before the House Committee on Veterans Affairs and assured Members that these cuts would not impact mission-essential positions, such as nurses, physicians, and claim examiners. Specifically, you stated "...the VA's staffing structure is aimed at finding ways to improve care and benefits for Veterans without cutting care and benefits for Veterans" and "we're going to maintain VA's mission-essential jobs like doctors, nurses, and claims processors, while phasing out non-mission essential roles…" This could not be further from the truth, as the June issue of the VA's Workforce Dashboard shows that the net losses for veteran-facing employees since you have taken office are estimated at 7,500, compared to the Biden Administration, which added 8,700 employees.[1] This number includes mission-essential jobs, specifically: 1,720 registered nurses, 1,147 Medical Support Assistants (MSA), 604 physicians, and 1,081 veteran claim examiners.

The data clearly shows that these cuts have resulted in mission-critical employees leaving for "lack of trust or confidence in senior leaders," "job stress or pressure," and "desired alternative

[1] VA Workforce Dashboard, Issue 26 (June 27, 2025), https://www.va.gov/EMPLOYEE/docs/workforce/VA-Workforce-Dashboard-Issue-26.pdf

work schedule not offered," which is most certainly related to the privacy concerns for telehealth therapists due to the administration's return-to-office policy. By terminating positions that handle administration, billing, and facility operations, the administration has forced mission-essential employees to carry out this work in addition to caring for our veterans.[2] As an occupational therapist, I know these losses are not because providers don't care, it is because they are overwhelmed and cannot keep up.

As the sole representative from Western New York serving on the Committee and given that the region is home to the Buffalo VA Medical Center and one of only two post-9/11 GI Bill Processing Centers, I am requesting a more detailed understanding of the current workforce situation in my district. Specifically, I ask for individual-level data on all employee departures from January 1, 2025, through August 5, 2025, within the Western New York Healthcare System[3], the Buffalo VA Regional Benefit Office, and the Western New York National Cemetery. The data should include, for each departing employee:

- Occupation
- Job title
- Grade level
- Facility/location
- Reason for departure
- Whether the employee was retirement-eligible
- Whether the employee participated in the Deferred Resignation Program (DRP)
- Whether the employee was terminated

This information is critical to understanding workforce trends and ensuring the needs of veterans in Western New York continue to be met.

Ensuring that veterans in Western New York have access to timely, high-quality care and benefit services remains my top priority. The ongoing reduction of mission-essential staff and its clear connection to the administration's workforce policies raise serious concerns about the VA's ability to meet its obligations to our nation's veterans. The people I represent deserve a full and transparent accounting of how these policies are affecting the services they rely on. I urge your prompt attention to this request and look forward to your detailed response.

Sincerely,



Timothy M. Kennedy
Member of Congress (NY-26)

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[2] "'Sense of doom': Morale plunges as some VA health workers fear worsening shortages, staffing cuts, https://www.cnn.com/2025/07/01/politics/veterans-affairs-collins-cuts-shortages-morale

[3] VA Western New York Healthcare System Locations, https://www.va.gov/western-new-york-health-care/