

Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-2207

Tuesday, March 4, 2025

Doug Collins  
Secretary of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Collins,

I am writing today to express concern about the recent workforce reductions at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). As you are aware, the VA has dismissed thousands of employees, many of whom are veterans who have dedicated their lives to serving the United States of America at home and abroad.

Make no mistake about it, the VA has been entrenched in bureaucracy unlike any other agency in the federal government for decades. In too many instances, this has resulted in unacceptable wait times, inadequate delivery of care, and a system that has failed veterans and leaves them feeling abandoned. I believe we can do better, which is why I support efforts by you and President Trump to make the VA the efficient, world-class agency our veterans deserve.

I also believe, however, that this must be done in a way that keeps our promise to all veterans at the VA, including those who receive care and those who help carry out its mission. While I am encouraged to hear mission critical positions, including Veterans Crisis Line responders, are exempt, I am concerned that probationary but otherwise qualified veterans are being unintentionally let go in the process.

The Department of Veterans Affairs has a responsibility to those it serves to exercise the utmost degree of discipline when reducing the workforce. We must collectively recognize that any veteran who hangs up their boots and continues to serve their country at the VA is cut from a different cloth. It is incumbent upon us to treat them with the dignity and respect they deserve, even if separation is warranted.

Therefore, I respectfully ask you to review your agency's process to guarantee only those who have truly underperformed and not met the expectations of their assignment are relieved of duty. Additionally, any individuals who were released despite meeting all performance-related expectations should be immediately considered for reinstatement.

Lastly, given our shared commitment to the well-being of our veteran community, it is my hope that we can also work together to find ways to support those who are dismissed and make their transition to new employment as smooth as possible.

I proudly served 22 years in the Army, and I know I speak for our brothers and sisters in arms when I say that we believe in accountability. It's at the heart of who we are as service members, which is why we hold ourselves to the highest standard and expect others to do the same. I am confident you understand that as a veteran yourself, and I hope you will take this simple truth into consideration before moving forward with any additional layoffs.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. I look forward to working with you to address this challenge and ensure we continue to have the backs of every veteran in our great nation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tom Barrett". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Tom Barrett  
Member of Congress