

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 28, 2025

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump:

I write regarding the January 20, 2025, Presidential Memorandum instituting an immediate hiring freeze of civil service federal employees. While the intended goal of the hiring freeze is to allow the government time to evaluate the size of the current workforce, I have concerns about the impact this hiring freeze will have on our nation's veterans, especially those in Maine. That is why I urge you to provide a full exemption to all Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) personnel to ensure continued services to our nation's heroes.

Our veterans deserve access to the best quality health care, the benefits they earned, and someone to answer the phone when they call for help. I worry that this hiring freeze will have harmful impacts on the VA and their ability to continue providing critical services to our veterans. As a former governor who implemented a hiring freeze for state employees, I encourage your administration to take a measured approach to implementation.

As you know, the VA provides various services to millions of veterans—from health care to life-saving assistance from the Veterans Crisis Line. VA employees across the Department dedicate their careers to caring for our veterans. Without a broad exemption, I worry that any hiring freeze would hurt access to veterans' benefits, including health care. For example, if support staff are not there to help schedule appointments or address IT issues, veterans will not be able to get care; if claims processors aren't processing disability claims, veterans will not receive benefits; if there aren't enough doctors and nurses, veterans will not have access to health care; if the National Cemetery Administration isn't properly staffed, veterans will not have access to burial benefits.

I appreciate new guidance from Acting VA Secretary Todd Hunter that clarifies that more than 300,000 health care positions at the VA will be considered essential to department operations, and therefore exempt from the hiring freeze. I urge you and the VA to ensure that all positions within the VA are considered as essential, so that we can continue to hire dedicated employees to serve and care for our veterans.

Veterans deserve the best care and we must deliver on the promises made to them. I look forward to working with you on this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Angus S. King, Jr." The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A' and a distinct 'Jr.' at the end.

ANGUS S. KING, JR.
United States Senator

Cc: Acting Secretary Todd Hunter, Department of Veterans Affairs