

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 6, 2025

COMMITTEES:
ARMED SERVICES
RANKING MEMBER, STRATEGIC FORCES
SUBCOMMITTEE
ENERGY AND
NATURAL RESOURCES
RANKING MEMBER, NATIONAL PARKS
SUBCOMMITTEE
INTELLIGENCE
VETERANS' AFFAIRS

The Honorable Doug Collins
Secretary of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Collins:

I write to immediately request information about both the 875 and 585 “non-mission critical”¹ contracts that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), at your direction, cancelled or proposed to cancel starting on or about February 25, with a particular focus on contracts that will impact services for veterans in the state of Maine. My constituents are confused by the back and forth of these announcements, and they need answers. To date, despite committing to transparency with Congress in your nomination process, your Department has refused to answer even the most basic questions my office and those of other Senators have asked about these contracts.

The press release announcing the March 3rd contract cancellations states that this move will not “negatively impact Veteran care, benefits or services”²; without knowing what these contracts cover, I am skeptical of these claims. Included in the 875 contracts first targeted for cancellation was a contract for the only radiation safety officer (RSO) at the Togus VA Medical Center in Maine. As you know, hospitals like Togus are required by multiple state and federal regulations to have an RSO³. The RSO is responsible for overseeing radiation safety programs and ensuring compliance with state, federal, and institutional regulations. The RSO also monitors radiation levels to ensure that measures are in place to detect potential hazardous levels of radiation and, in the event of a radiation incident or exposure, they investigate and report the circumstances of the event and implement corrective actions. Cancelling this position would negatively impact veteran care and may force Togus to close their radiology department.

Additionally, my office has been notified that a Maine constituent is a subcontractor on another contract included in the list of 875; that contract gathers data on the implementation of suicide prevention practices. We share a commitment to ending veteran suicide, and during your confirmation hearing before the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee (SVAC), you made a full-throated commitment to working with members of the Committee on this issue.

¹ “VA to terminate 585 non-mission-critical or duplicative contracts,” <https://news.va.gov/press-room/va-to-terminate-585-non-mission-critical-or-duplicative-contracts/> March 3, 2025.

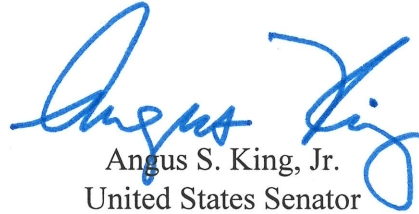
² *Id.*

³ For example: **Title 10 of the Code of Federal Regulations:** Part 20 (standards for protection against radiation: <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-10/chapter-I/part-20>) and Part 35 (medical use of byproduct material: <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-10/chapter-I/part-35>);

Nuclear Regulatory Commission: regulating the use of radioactive materials and establishing standards for RSO <https://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/doc-collections/cfr/part035/part035-0024.html>; VHA Directive 1105: Management of Radioactive Materials defines the responsibilities of RSOs at VA medical facilities (https://www.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=9188)

Unfortunately, these cancellations run counter to your commitment. That is why I am asking you to work with members of SVAC and provide answers to the questions we are being asked by our constituents. Please provide my office with a full list of the 585 contracts cancelled, as well as a separate list of all contracts cancelled with a footprint in Maine, no later than COB Friday, March 7.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Angus King", is written over the typed name and title.

Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator