

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 8, 2017

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump:

As the sponsors of H.R. 1001, the *Veterans Federal Hiring Protection Act*, we are writing to respectfully urge you to exempt America's veterans from the application of your January 23, 2017 "*Presidential Memorandum Regarding the Hiring Freeze*." As you know, this executive action has resulted in the implementation of a government-wide hiring freeze and prohibits federal agencies from hiring full-time federal workers, including veterans.

During your recent Joint Address to Congress, you stated, "[o]ur veterans have delivered for this nation, and now we must deliver for them."¹ We strongly agree. However, the hiring freeze that is indiscriminately in place across all federal agencies only impairs our collective ability to live up to this promise. In particular, it has closed the doors of the Federal Government, our nation's largest single employer of veterans, to our returning service men and women who have more than earned their Veterans' Preference Eligibility and the opportunity to transition to civilian life in continued and dedicated service to the American people.

According to the Office of Personnel Management and its most recent report on "*Employment of Veterans in the Federal Executive Branch*," America's veterans currently represent 30.9% of our federal workforce nationwide, or approximately 623,755 out of 2,016,325 employees.² Veterans that are currently employed in the Federal Government include 320,407 employees at the Department of Defense, 120,187 employees at the Department of Veterans Affairs, 52,226 employees at the Department of Homeland Security, and over 130,000 employees at other federal agencies ranging from the Social Security Administration and the Small Business Administration to the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Labor.³ Moreover, an estimated 243,177 veterans in the federal workforce are disabled veterans, including 146,872 veterans with a disability rating of 30% or greater.⁴

Veterans' employment in the Federal Government has also risen considerably in recent years. While federal agencies reported 65,030 veteran new hires and a veteran new hire

¹ President Donald J. Trump, *Joint Address to Congress* (February 28, 2017) (online at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/02/28/remarks-president-trump-joint-address-congress>).

² United States Office of Personnel Management, *Employment of Veterans in the Federal Executive Branch Fiscal Year 2015* (November 2016) (online at <https://www.fedshirevets.gov/hire/hrp/reports/EmploymentOfVets-FY15.pdf>).

³ *Id.*

⁴ *Id.*

percentage of 28.3% in Fiscal Year 2011, they recently reported 71,867 veteran new hires and an increased veteran new hire percentage of 32.5%.⁵ Veterans hired by the Federal Government in Fiscal Year 2015 included 31,616 disabled veterans and 21,215 veterans with a disability rating of 30% or greater.⁶ In addition, the current percentage of overall veterans' representation in the federal workforce has increased from 25.8% in Fiscal Year 2009, when the Federal Government employed an estimated 512,000 veterans, to one-third of all federal employees, or 623,755 veterans, in Fiscal Year 2015.⁷

The federal hiring freeze that is now in place has indefinitely halted the progress that we have made in ensuring that those who have served in defense of our nation receive opportunities to transition to civilian life that are commensurate with their sacrifice. This commitment to America's veterans is set forth in Executive Order 13518, entitled "*Employment of Veterans in the Federal Government*."⁸ The order provides that the Federal Government "*will thereby help lead by example in promoting veterans' employment*."⁹ It also underscores that when veterans complete their military service, "*we must do everything in our power to assist them in re-entering civilian life and finding employment*."¹⁰

We would also note that implementation of the federal hiring freeze commenced just as the Bureau of Labor Statistics issued its January 2017 "*Employment Situation*" report indicating that the unemployment rate among our nation's newest generation of veterans is rising. In contrast to the 5.7% unemployment rate for veterans that have served our nation since September of 2001 that was reported in January of 2016, the current unemployment rate for this group of veterans is 6.3%.¹¹ Our youngest generation of veterans includes more than 211,000 veterans from Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and other overseas deployments.¹²

Given the disproportionate impact of the federal hiring freeze on America's veterans, it is no surprise that a range of Veterans Service Organizations have continued to underscore concern with this executive action. They include the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, Disabled American Veterans, and Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America ("IAVA"). As recently stated by IAVA President Paul Rieckhoff, IAVA member "*job-seekers waiting to hear about a hiring determination just had their hopes dashed*."¹³ Similarly, American Legion National Commander Charles E. Schmidt noted, "*[v]eterans, particularly disabled veterans, have often looked to the federal government as an institution where they could find*

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ Exec. Order No. 13518, 3 C.F.R. 267 (2009) (online at <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-2010-title3-voll1/pdf/CFR-2010-title3-voll1-eo13518.pdf>).

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ *Id.* Bureau of Labor Statistics, *The Employment Situation – January 2017* (February 3, 2017) (online at <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/empst.pdf>).

¹¹ *Id.*

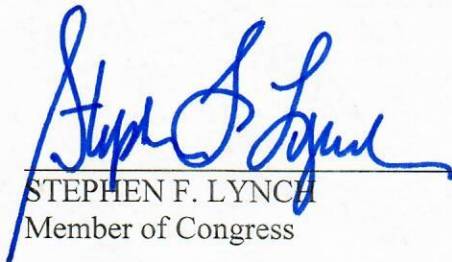
¹² *Id.*

¹³ Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America Press Release, *Veterans Fear Impact of Federal Government Hiring Freeze* (January 24, 2017) (online at <https://iava.org/press-release/veterans-fear-impact-of-federal-government-hiring-freeze/>).

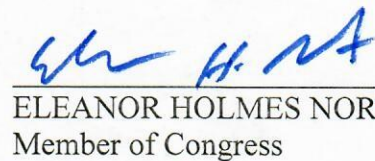
meaningful employment” and that “[t]his hiring freeze will certainly impact their job prospects.”¹⁴

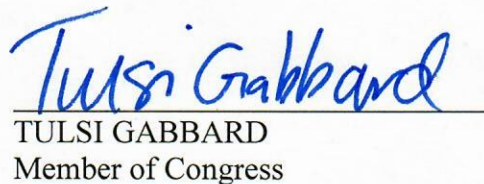
The legislation that we have all sponsored in the House of Representatives would address these concerns. H.R. 1001, the *Veterans Federal Hiring Protection Act*, would exempt America’s veterans from the federal hiring freeze and allow federal agencies to continue to hire our returning service men and women. We respectfully urge you to take executive action to do the same. We thank you in advance for your consideration.

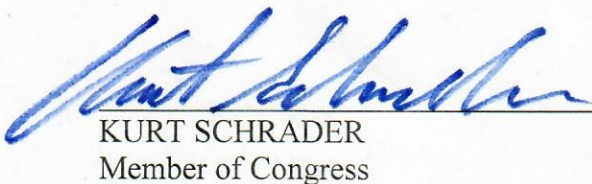
Sincerely,


STEPHEN F. LYNCH
Member of Congress

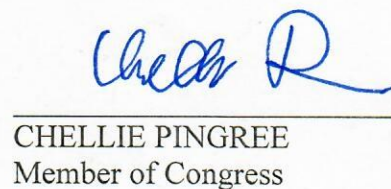

TIM RYAN
Member of Congress

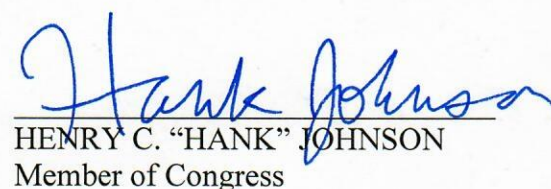

ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON
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TULSI GABBARD
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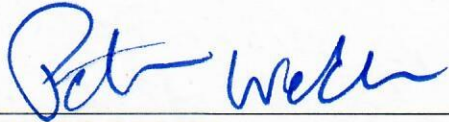

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HENRY C. “HANK” JOHNSON
Member of Congress

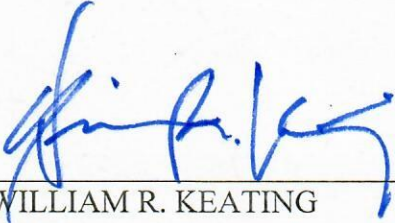
¹⁴ The American Legion Press Release, *Legion Offers Praise, Concerns about White House Executive Orders* (January 25, 2017) (online at <https://www.legion.org/commander/235743/legion-offers-praise-concerns-about-white-house-executive-orders>).



PETER WELCH
Member of Congress



TONY CARDENAS
Member of Congress



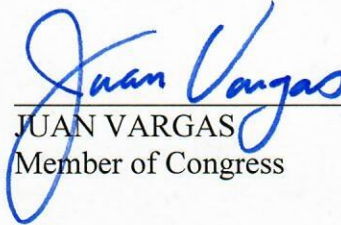
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Member of Congress



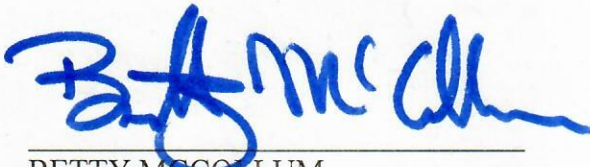
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Member of Congress



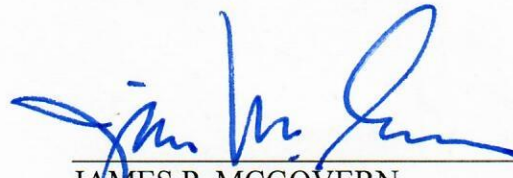
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JUAN VARGAS
Member of Congress



BETTY MCCOLLUM
Member of Congress



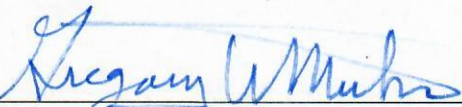
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ALCEE L. HASTINGS
Member of Congress



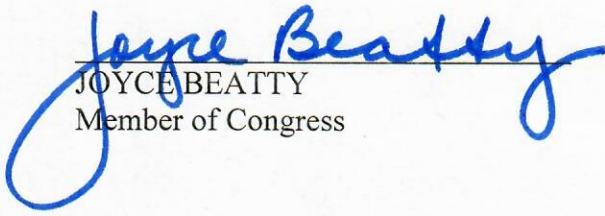
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