President-elect Donald J. Trump
Trump Tower
725 5th Avenue
New York, NY 10022

Dear President-elect Trump:

We are writing to respectfully request that you reconsider your proposal to implement a so-called “federal hiring freeze” across the federal government.

On October 22, 2016, you announced that on your first day in office, the Trump Administration will pursue a “hiring freeze on all federal employees to reduce federal workforce through attrition...”1 While you indicated that your plan would exclude “military, public safety, and public health employees,” the nature and extent of these exemptions remain unclear. In support of this proposal, your presidential campaign issued a statement asserting that “[i]n the long term, a smaller federal workforce will mean a more honest and effective government, in which it is harder to hide corruption.”2

We are strongly concerned that a government-wide hiring freeze would have precisely the opposite effect for several reasons.

Firstly, the impact of hiring freezes enacted during previous Democratic and Republican Administrations demonstrates that such measures have not, in fact, significantly reduced the size of our federal workforce or enhanced federal government operations.3 Rather, they have served to decrease efficiency, transparency, and accountability government-wide at the expense of the public safety and American taxpayer dollars.4 Similar to your proposal, these hiring freezes included general human safety and other exemptions.5

In 1982, GAO issued a seminal audit report, entitled “Recent Government-Wide Hiring Freezes Prove Ineffective in Managing Federal Employment,” that is still referenced as an authority in federal workforce management today.6 In reviewing a series of hiring freezes implemented during the Carter and Reagan Administrations, GAO concluded that while the freezes “provided an illusion of control” over federal workforce levels, they were “not an

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4 *Id.*
5 *Id.*
6 *Id.*
effective means of controlling federal employment.” Agencies were simply forced to compensate for the inability to hire permanent staff by increasing their employment of temporary and part-time workers. They also resorted to an extraordinary reliance on private contractors.

GAO additionally found that the inability to fill vacancies on a permanent basis severely prevented federal workers and agencies from doing their jobs. In particular, “because they ignored individual agencies’ missions, workload, and staffing requirements,” the hiring freezes disrupted critical agency operations and diminished federal oversight of agency programs. Chief among agency efforts that were undermined by the hiring freezes were pipeline safety monitoring, nuclear safety regulations, and the provision of timely and quality veterans’ healthcare. One hiring freeze implemented during the Carter Administration facilitated a clerical staff shortage at a Veterans Affairs Medical Center that required healthcare professionals to perform administrative duties over core job functions; this led to increased patient waiting times and delays in the processing of medical examinations. Similarly, past hiring freezes restricted the independent oversight work performed by Federal Offices of Inspectors General to identify waste, fraud, and abuse in federal spending.

In addition, a government-wide hiring freeze would exacerbate the serious workforce skills challenges facing a federal government that must continue to address a variety of evolving 21st Century issues including cybersecurity, terrorism, consumer safety, and environmental threats. Since 2011, GAO has identified the existence of several “mission-critical skills gaps” across the federal government that pose “a high risk to the nation because they impede the government from cost effectively serving the public and achieving results.” The federal jobs associated with mission-critical skills gaps include those relating to cybersecurity, science, technology, math, engineering, auditing and inspections, procurement, and other key trades. In order to close the skills gaps for at-risk occupations, GAO has recommended that federal agencies undertake immediate and robust efforts to hire employees with expertise in these areas, especially given that approximately one-third of full time federal workers on board as of the end of Fiscal Year 2015 will be eligible to retire by 2019.

Furthermore, a federal hiring freeze would continue to stretch thin a dedicated federal workforce whose employment levels have remained relatively stagnant over the past several decades in comparison to the growing American public that it serves. Since the 1960s, our federal workforce has modestly increased by 10% to its current size of approximately 2.5 million employees while the American population has grown over 67% to over 323 million people.

7 Id.
8 Id.
9 Id.
10 Id.
11 Id.
12 Id.
13 Id.
15 Id.
16 Id.
Over this same time period, our private sector workforce has increased by roughly 136%.\textsuperscript{18} Devastating sequestration cuts, related furloughs, and even a 16-day government shutdown have already strained our federal workforce in recent years. A federal hiring freeze would impose additional constraints on federal agencies and employees who are already operating under difficult budgetary limitations.

For these reasons, we again respectfully urge you to reconsider your proposal to implement an across-the-board federal hiring freeze. We thank you in advance for your consideration of this letter.

Sincerely,

STEPHEN F. LYNCH
Member of Congress

STENY H. HOYER
Member of Congress

ELLIJAH E. CUMMINGS
Member of Congress

GERALD E. CONNOLLY
Member of Congress

JOHN CONYERS, JR.
Member of Congress

ADAM B. SCHIFF
Member of Congress

RAUL M. GRIJALVA
Member of Congress

TIM RYAN
Member of Congress

\textsuperscript{18} Id.
C.A. DUTCH RUPPERSBERGER  
Member of Congress

ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON  
Member of Congress

DONALD S. BEYER, JR.  
Member of Congress

RICHARD M. NOLAN  
Member of Congress

MADELEINE Z. BORDALLO  
Member of Congress

GRACE MENG  
Member of Congress

NYDIA M. VELAZQUEZ  
Member of Congress

MICHAEL F. DOYLE  
Member of Congress

MARCY KAPTUR  
Member of Congress

JAMES P. MCGOVERN  
Member of Congress

BONNIE WATSON COLEMAN  
Member of Congress

ERIC SWALWELL  
Member of Congress
BETO O’ROURKE
Member of Congress

STEVE COHEN
Member of Congress

ROBERT C. "BOBBY" SCOTT
Member of Congress

ROBERT A. BRADY
Member of Congress

BETTY MCCOLLUM
Member of Congress

DAVID N. CICILLINE
Member of Congress

SETH MOULTON
Member of Congress

LUCILLE ROYBAL-ALLARD
Member of Congress

JOE COURTNEY
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DARREN SOTO
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MARK DESAULNIER
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EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON  
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JOSE E. SERRANO  
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KATHY CASTOR  
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CAROLYN B. MALONEY  
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CHELLIE PINGREE  
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PAUL TONKO  
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LOYD DOGGETT  
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SEAN PATRICK MALONEY  
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ALBIO SIERES
Member of Congress

ALAN LOWENTHAL
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JAMES R. LANGEVIN
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JUAN VARGAS
Member of Congress

RICK LARSEN
Member of Congress

HENRY "HANK" JOHNSON, JR.
Member of Congress

EARL BLUMENAUER
Member of Congress

COLLIN C. PETERSON
Member of Congress

ALMA S. ADAMS
Member of Congress

MARK POCAN
Member of Congress

TONY CÁRDENAS
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DONALD NORCROSS
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