

U.S. House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS

364 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515

<http://veterans.house.gov>

January 30, 2025

Mr. Todd Hunter
Acting Secretary
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Mr. Hunter:

We write today to express our concern about your recent actions to dismantle two Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) offices that serve women and minority veterans. We fear the abrupt firing yesterday of two Directors in your agency, Ms. Lourdes Tiglao, Director of the Center for Women Veterans, and Mr. James Albino, Director of the Center for Minority Veterans, is just the first step of your plan to decimate VA offices and functions tasked with improving services for unique populations of veterans.

Ms. Tiglao and Mr. Albino—both veterans themselves—have played an integral role in improving veterans' access to VA benefits, healthcare, and other services since they were appointed in 2021. Their hasty terminations—less than 2 weeks in to the Trump Administration—raises serious questions about the Administration's commitment to meeting the needs of women veterans and minority veterans. Furthermore, we are alarmed that more than a day later, there has been no communication from you or your Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs to Committee members regarding the terminations of Ms. Tiglao and Mr. Albino. Additionally, the Administration's decision to execute these terminations before the Senate has even confirmed a new VA Secretary calls into question the President Trump's commitment to properly serving our nation's veterans.

The Center for Minority Veterans and the Center for Women Veterans were established through Public Law in 1994.¹ Under this law, Directors of each Center are appointed to terms of six years, signaling it was not Congress's intent for these positions to be politicized. The Directors of these two Centers are charged with serving as advisors to the Secretary and making recommendations to the Secretary and

¹Veterans' Benefits Improvements Act of 1994, Pub. L. No. 103-446, Sec. 509.

VA's Under Secretaries regarding the establishment or improvement of programs for which women veterans and minority veterans are eligible. In establishing the Center for Minority Veterans and the Center for Women Veterans, Congress demonstrated its commitment to ensuring all veterans receive equal access to the benefits and care they have earned through their service to our nation.

Women are the fastest-growing group of veterans. Nearly a third of current active-duty service members identify as a racial minority. Millions of veterans are not Caucasian white males, and those numbers will continue to grow as women and minorities continue to heed the call to service and don the uniform with pride. Women and minority veterans exist and will continue to exist despite your attempts to erase them and to destroy the VA offices Congress specifically created to serve them.

Your attack on the Center for Women Veterans and the Center for Minority Veterans goes beyond attacking Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion programs, to actively working to diminish veterans' access to healthcare and benefits they have earned. We will remind you, once again, that these two programs were created by Congress through statute, and that our Committee has a vital role in providing oversight and accountability to any administrative changes that may impact the intent of these centers.

We request VA provide written responses to the following questions:

1. Do you intend to shutter operations in the Center for Women Veterans and/or the Center for Minority Veterans? Please provide a detailed explanation.
2. Please provide a detailed explanation regarding your decision to remove Mr. Albino and Ms. Tiglao from their positions. If you have identified replacements for these two positions, please provide their names and start dates.
3. Will any additional staff in either the Center for Women Veterans or Center for Minority Veterans be removed? If so, who and when? Please provide a list of any employees you intend to terminate, including job title, grade, and position description.
4. To the extent that VA plans to terminate additional employees in the Center for Women Veterans or Center for Minority Veterans, how will you ensure the Department's compliance with 38 U.S.C. §317 and §318 without sufficient staff or without staff with institutional knowledge about the Centers' missions and work?
5. Please outline your detailed plan to ensure that the Center for Women Veterans continues its efforts to connect women veterans with VA programs and benefits that meet their needs.

6. Please outline your detailed plan to ensure that the Center for Minority Veterans continues its efforts to connect minority veterans with VA programs and benefits that meet their needs.

We ask that you provide written responses to the above questions no later than **February 7, 2025**. Additionally, we request that you provide a briefing for Committee staff no later than **February 14, 2025**. Should you have any questions about this request, you may contact Ms. Ally Cimino (Ally.Cimino@mail.house.gov) and Ms. Alexis MacDonald (alexis.macdonald@mail.house.gov).

Sincerely,



Mark Takano
Ranking Member



Julia Brownley
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Health

cc: Chairman Mike Bost
Health Subcommittee Chairwoman Mariannette Miller-Meeks