

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 29, 2025

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

Dear Mr. Hunter,

Upon taking office on January 20, 2025, President Trump issued Executive Orders (EO) that repeal President Biden's Executive Order 13985, "Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government," and President Lyndon Johnson's Executive Order 11246, "Equal Employment Opportunity."¹

President Trump's new EOs direct the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to take adverse employment actions against civil servants. However, I am concerned these orders contradict the policies the federal government has in place to provide additional hiring assistance for veterans, including the additional support long afforded to disabled veterans.

Veterans comprise 30% of the federal workforce as of 2023, and among that group, more than 50% are disabled veterans. Of the millions of veterans who serve in our federal agencies, 88% were hired under "Veterans' Preference," a policy which is designed to give the strongest preference to veterans who have a service-connected disability rating of 30% or greater. Additionally, there are federal contracting preferences or set-asides exclusively for eligible Veteran Owned Small Businesses (VOSB) and Service-Disabled Veteran Owned Small Businesses (SDVOSB).

Due to these measures, economic data from U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and Census Bureau indicate that veterans are less likely to be unemployed than non-veterans. For these reasons, we are greatly alarmed that removing measures aimed towards inclusion and accessibility will result in fewer veterans being employed by the federal government or becoming successful business owners.

¹See Executive Order of President Donald J. Trump, "Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing" (January 20, 2025) and Executive Order of President Donald J. Trump, "Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit Based Opportunity" (January 21, 2025).

To understand the full scope and impact of these EOs on veterans and their employment, I request responses to the following questions:

1. How many VA employees hold positions in offices set to be closed under the order “Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing?”
 - a. How many of these individuals are veterans?
 - b. How many of these individuals are service-disabled veterans?
2. As the individuals tasked with carrying out veteran preference hiring and workplace accessibility measures at VA are currently aligned in the same offices set for closure under the President’s administrative actions, please provide documentation as to how VA will ensure these policies continue to be executed after these offices close.
3. Under the Executive Order “Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity,” the federal government and contractors are directed to cease all activities promoting diversity.
 - a. Does this order also cease federal veteran preference in contracting and hiring? Please provide documentation that supports your position.
 - b. Are contractors also directed to cease hiring practices that prioritize veterans and veterans with disabilities?

I look forward to your prompt attention into this inquiry, and ask that you provide a written response by no later than February 7, 2025. Should you have any questions about this request, you may contact Mr. Justin Vogt (Justin.Vogt@mail.house.gov) with the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Takano". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mark" being more prominent and the last name "Takano" following in a similar style.

Mark Takano
Ranking Member

CC: U.S. Department of Labor Acting Secretary Vince Micone
Special Counsel Hampton Dellinger, U.S. Office of Special Counsel
Chairman Mike Bost