

Keeping our promise to the nation's veterans

The American Legion advocates to ensure veteran health care and benefits are not negatively impacted by recent policy and personnel actions.

Last week, I testified before a joint session of the Senate and House Veterans' Affairs Committees. While this is usually a forum for The American Legion to present legislative priorities, most questions from members of Congress were related to recent policy and personnel actions by the White House and U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), including firings, contract cancellations, hiring freezes, return to work orders and voluntary resignations.

Billed as an effort to increase government efficiency, there has been growing concern in the veteran community these actions have had, and will continue to have, significant negative impacts on VA's core missions. I understand these concerns and empathize with veterans who are anxious about the speed and justification for these changes. On Tuesday, a leaked internal memo outlined a process by which VA will conduct a department-wide personnel review by May 9 and publish a plan for Reduction-in-Force by the end of Fiscal Year 2025, "as required by [the Office of Management & Budget and the Office of Personnel Management]." This agency review could potentially lead to a further 83,000 job cuts, reducing total VA staff to 2019 levels.

While The American Legion believes VA should be efficient and accountable for the veterans it serves, a 2019 staff posture does not take into consideration the increased demand for health care and benefits after passage of the PACT Act in 2022. With fewer employees, the VA's ability to meet this demand would be called into question, and considering roughly 25% of federal employees are veterans themselves, up to 83,000 job cuts could put up to 20,000+ veterans out of work.

In Washington, D.C., The American Legion is consistently engaged on your behalf. As these cuts have the potential to threaten services our nation's veterans earned and depend on, I promise our 1.6 million members — and all veterans — we are taking action. The American Legion will work to ensure the administration's efforts to make VA more efficient do not result in unintended consequences for veterans. I ask all Legionnaires to be active in your peer support networks and Be the One to assist your fellow veterans and their families in need.

During our 2025 Washington Conference, we met with VA Secretary Doug Collins and senior personnel at VA's internal agencies to communicate our priorities and concerns and ask for increased transparency related to the methodology and potential impacts of agency

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actions. We are committed to working with VA leadership to ensure your voice is heard. Furthermore, we are actively communicating with members of Congress and will immediately raise the alarm when we see any mission-critical impacts to veterans.

That's where you come in. Our voice in D.C. is only powerful if we hear from Legionnaires and communicate your message to policymakers. So if you or an immediate family member are personally impacted by recent or future government actions, I ask you to contact our Government Relations office and tell your story via The American Legion Impact Survey: <https://www.votervoicenet.com/AmericanLegion/Surveys/12345/Respond>.

Your voice is crucial to convey the human impact of these policies back to the White House and VA, advocating on your behalf. And in Congress, we will use your story to urge members of both parties to exercise oversight authority when necessary.

Additionally, The American Legion stands ready to assist veterans affected by job loss through job fairs and employment initiatives, emergency financial assistance and free claims processing – in the public or private sector.

Since The American Legion was founded, we have been a powerful voice to ensure our government lives up to Lincoln's immortal promise to care for those who have borne the battle. We have never shied away from this responsibility. We won't start now.

For God and Country,

National Commander

James LaCoursiere Jr.



**VETERANS STRENGTHENING
AMERICA**

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