

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 10, 2025

Mr. Charles Ezell
Acting Director
Office of Personnel Management
1900 E Street, NW
Washington, DC 20415

Mr. Russell Vought
Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th St NW,
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Mr. Ezell and Mr. Vought:

We write to request information about the reduction in force (RIF) plans that aim to terminate hundreds of thousands of employees at federal agencies across the country at the purported direction of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and the so-called Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE).

On February 11, 2025, President Trump signed an executive order entitled *Implementing the President's "Department of Government Efficiency" Workforce Optimization Initiative* that directs agencies to initiate large-scale RIFs.¹ It calls for agencies to use their staffing plans for skeleton operations during a government shutdown as a blueprint for the RIFs, which could mean cuts to the magnitude of 700,000 employees.² On February 26, 2025, OPM and OMB released a memo that states RIF plans should include a significant reduction in full-time positions, while implausibly *increasing* productivity and providing *better* service for the American people.³ The executive order and joint OPM-OMB memo underscore that agencies should significantly reduce the number of full-time positions, using their shutdown operations plans “as the starting point for making this determination.”⁴ The executive order and guidance memo make clear that the Administration is working toward massive, across-the-board layoffs for the sake of layoffs, rather than a true effort to improve agency efficiency.

As you know, in order to conduct a legal RIF, an agency must follow strict regulations, including considering veteran status, in order to determine whether a position is eliminated and whether the employee in an eliminated position has a right to a different position as detailed in Title 5 of the

¹ [Implementing The President's "Department of Government Efficiency" Workforce Optimization Initiative](#)

² [Trump orders agencies to plan for widespread layoffs and attrition-based hiring Government Executive](#)

³ [Guidance on Agency RIF and Reorganization Plans Requested by Implementing The President's "Department of Government Efficiency" Workforce Optimization Initiative](#)

⁴ [Guidance on Agency RIF and Reorganization Plans Requested by Implementing The President's "Department of Government Efficiency" Workforce Optimization Initiative](#)

Code of Federal Regulations.⁵ Additionally, RIFs are expensive and time consuming. If the agencies are following the regulations, the process takes considerable manpower and resources.⁶

Given the complex and methodical legal process required for RIFs, we are concerned about the Administration's ability to conduct proper RIFs due to their recent haphazard efforts to terminate probationary employees en masse. The Administration realized that their own efforts were indiscriminate to a fault as made evident by their subsequent scrambling to rehire fired workers who were responding to the bird flu, maintaining the nuclear arsenal, and ensuring food and medical device safety.⁷

Further, the size and scope of the reported RIF plans are clearly not about government efficiency. The Department of Education has announced layoffs of 50% and the Department of Veterans Affairs has proposed cuts of over 80,000 employees.⁸ The Department of Defense is seeking to reduce its civilian workforce by 5-8%, or 61,000 employees, and the IRS reportedly plans to cut around 25% of its workforce, or 20,000 employees.⁹ On April 1, 2025, the Department of Health and Human Services began the process of firing 10,000 employees, in addition to 10,000 employees who left their positions through the deferred resignation program and other downsizing efforts.¹⁰ Two days later, Secretary Kennedy suggested that 20% of these terminations could be mistakes. The Secretary stated, "[p]ersonnel that should not have been cut were cut... that was always the plan. Part of the DOGE, we talked about this from the beginning, is we're going to do 80% cuts, but 20% of those are going to have to be reinstated, because we'll make mistakes." The Social Security Administration (SSA) has already lost over 7,000 employees through terminations and resignations since February and closed 6 of 10 regional offices, leading to increased wait times and multiple website crashes over the past month—yet SSA plans to cut thousands more.¹¹

Federal employees provide critical services for the American people including supporting our veterans, coordinating disaster response, preventing wildfires, helping farmers improve crop yields, managing health benefits for 9/11 first responders, researching treatments and cures for diseases, keeping air travel safe, processing tax returns, and staffing our national parks. These dedicated public servants include experts in their field and veterans seeking to continue their service to our country out of uniform. Every indication suggests that these mass terminations amount to a catastrophic, strategic hollowing out of the federal workforce. The ultimate goal is clear: weaken the federal government to serve the President's politics rather than the needs of the American people. After federal agencies are gutted, we fear the Administration will replace the dedicated, nonpartisan civil servants with political loyalists and sell agencies for parts to unaccountable corporations that will profit off the backs of taxpayers, privatizing critical services from Social Security benefits to air traffic control.

⁵ 5 CFR §315.801

⁶ [RIFs are a complicated, time-consuming process for agencies, experts say](#): Federal News Network [Reduction in Force Can Sometimes Be More Costly to Agencies Than Attrition and Furlough](#): GAO

⁷ [Fired, Then Rehired, by the Trump Administration](#): New York Times

⁸ [U.S. Department of Education Initiates Reduction in Force](#)
[VA plans to lay off as many as 83,000 employees this year](#)

⁹ [Pentagon is cutting up to 60,000 civilian jobs. About a third of those took voluntary resignations](#) Federal News Network; [IRS will cut 25% of its employees, eliminating its civil rights office](#) Washington Post

¹⁰ [HHS cuts 10,000 employees in major overhaul of health agencies](#) CNN

¹¹ [Social Security faces thousands more job cuts even with service in tailspin](#) Washington Post

As the Administration has already taken careless and transparently illegal actions against federal workers, we request by April 21, 2025 detailed answers to the following questions to better understand the impact of the planned mass terminations.

1. Provide copies of the Phase 1 and Phase 2 Agency RIF and Reorganization plans submitted to OPM and OMB by March 13 and April 14, 2025, respectively.
2. According to the memo, Agency RIF and Reorganization Plans were due to OPM and OMB on March 13, 2025. Please describe the process for:
 - a. How those plans are being reviewed;
 - b. What evaluation metrics are being used;
 - c. Who is involved in reviewing the plans;
 - d. Who has ultimate decision-making authority regarding what competitive areas and positions are included in the RIF; and
 - e. How the administration will share plans with Congress regarding programs and work that are facing proposed termination and whether any of that work is statutory or receives appropriated fund.
1. Please provide a description of the data and processes OPM and/or OMB is using or directing agencies to use to measure the impact of RIFs and the cancelation of leases, including the impact relating to:
 - a. Costs or savings to agency budgets;
 - b. Agency performance;
 - c. Delivery of services to constituents;
 - d. National security; and
 - e. Public safety.
2. How are each of the following DOGE entities (as outlined in the DOGE Executive Order) involved in the creation and execution of Agency RIF and Reorganization Plans? Will agency officials be allowed to disagree with RIF directives from DOGE employees?
 - a. US DOGE Service;
 - b. DOGE Temporary Organization;
 - c. Agency DOGE Team Officials; and
 - d. Special Government Employees, such as Elon Musk.
3. Did OPM, OMB, DOGE, or any other entity or individual involved with directives relating in the termination of employees articulate any consequences to agencies if they refuse to develop a RIF plan? If so, please describe the articulated consequences.
4. Have any agencies or categories of positions been exempted from the directives relating to RIFs? If so, on what basis?
5. A RIF must take veteran status into account. How does the Administration plan to apply the veteran's preference criteria? Please provide data about the number of veterans at each agency who are going to be impacted.

6. Will individuals who took the deferred resignation programs be exempted from RIFs? How will employees who took the deferred resignation program be considered when creating RIF registers? How does the Administration plan to honor deferred resignation agreements without violating statutes and regulations dictating the order of retention?
7. According to Title 5 “When a reduction in force is caused by circumstances not reasonably foreseeable, the Director of OPM, at the request of an agency head or designee, may approve a notice period of less than 60 days.”¹² OPM’s website uses natural disasters as an example of an unforeseen circumstance.¹³ The joint memo from OPM and OMB states that agencies can request such waivers to shorten the period. Considering this RIF is being initiated by executive order, please describe:
 - a. How an agency would be able to qualify for such a waiver;
 - b. If any agencies have requested a waiver; and
 - c. What legal precedents OPM has for justifying waivers.
8. Agencies are statutorily required to fulfill their missions. With the planned RIFs, how will the Administration ensure that agencies have adequate staff to provide critical services to the American people and perform duties that are required by law?
9. The Impoundment Control Act requires the executive branch to spend the money that Congress appropriates, which includes funding for administrative accounts, salaries and expenses. In the case of RIFs, where will unused salaries and expense funding be reallocated? If funds are being transferred to other functions, what is the underlying transfer authority for that action?
10. Appropriations law requires many agencies to provide notification to Congress prior to reduction in personnel or reprogramming of funds. Please provide copies of any notifications provided to Congress as required by law, or indicate if notices are forthcoming and when they are expected.
11. A considerable amount of federal government hiring in the past few years was aimed at operationalizing the programs congressionally mandated by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Bipartisan CHIPS and Science Act. How will the RIFs impact the execution of those efforts that are required by law?
12. Sourcing tech, cyber, and AI talent has been a major focus of federal hiring initiatives. How does the Administration plan to ensure that the government continues to innovate and protect our nation’s interests despite the mass RIFs?

By April 21, 2025, and with weekly updates thereafter, provide:

1. The number of employees who have separated from each agency since January 20, 2025, voluntarily or involuntarily, including:

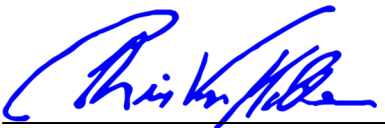
¹² 5 CFR § 315.201

¹³ [Summary of Reduction in Force Under OPM's Regulations](#); OPM

- a. The percentage of the total workforce this number reflects at the time of separation, including at the agency component and subcomponent levels;
 - b. The geographic location of the terminated employees; and
 - c. The number and percentage of terminated employees who are veterans.
2. The number of employees that each agency has terminated since January 20, 2025,
3. The number of employees that each agency has reinstated or placed on administrative leave following a separation since January 20, 2025.
4. The number of employees at each agency who have voluntarily separated since January 20, 2025, including:
 - a. The number and percentage of employees participating in the deferred resignation program; and
 - b. The number and percentage of employees who accepted early retirement or buyout offers from the agency.
5. The number of employees currently in administrative leave at each agency.
6. All records relating to agency RIFs and reorganizations, including:
 - a. All briefings, memoranda, and other materials, whether interim or final, prepared by OPM or OMB or received by OPM and OMB;
 - b. All communications between OPM, OMB, and federal agencies;
 - c. All internal communications at OPM and OMB; and
 - d. All communications between OPM, OMB, and other entities, including DOGE

Thank you for addressing our grave concerns regarding the unwarranted and possibly illegal termination of hundreds of thousands of civil servants. Please respond to us no later than April 21, 2025.

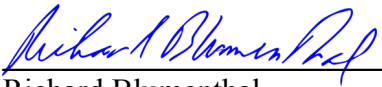
Sincerely,



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Gary C. Peters
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator
Chairman, Permanent
Subcommittee on
Investigations



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator



Angela Alsobrooks
United States Senator



Lisa Blunt Rochester
United States Senator



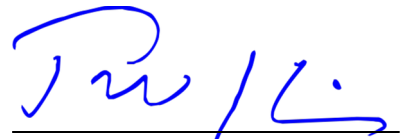
Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Mark R. Warner
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator