

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 13, 2025

The Honorable Pete Hegseth
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Hegseth,

We write to encourage you to exempt all depots, shipyards, arsenals, and maintenance facilities across the DoD from any department-wide civilian hiring freezes, pauses, restrictions, or limitations. Based on engagement with these facilities in our districts, we believe current policies are hurting their ability to manage attrition and to recruit for increased workload from the military services.

We are highly concerned that a sustained reduction in workforce stemming from these hiring limitations will lead to worse depot, shipyard, and arsenal execution, increase DoD reliance on private contractors for depot-level maintenance workloads, and reduce readiness against our peer adversaries.

We wanted to recall a Memorandum from the Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel Readiness on March 18, 2025 titled “Guidance on Hiring Freeze Exemptions for the Civilian Workforce,” which outlined that “positions at depots, shipyards, arsenals, and maintenance facilities” would be exempted from the Department-wide civilian hiring freeze for positions related to building readiness and providing essential services. While we are grateful for these instructions, our facilities are still dealing with de-facto restrictions and harmful red tape. Software onboarding systems such as USAStaffing.gov remain off limits to military services and DoD agencies, preventing those who have received hiring exemptions from bringing on new hires. Military services are also not allowed to openly recruit for civilian roles vacated by employees who have taken the first two Deferred Resignation Programs, leaving mission-critical maintenance roles vacant. Moreso, new White House guidance requiring agencies to only hire one new employee for every four employees who leave the government poses unique challenges for our facilities, given that they are funded through the Working Capital Fund (“WCF”) – a revenue stream that our depots, arsenals, and shipyards generate from the military services based on billable hours and contracted workload – as opposed to Congressional appropriations.

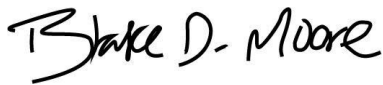
WCF operations generate revenue only from the work accomplished by their labor force. If WCF facilities are unable to recruit to replace departed workers, their operations will lose the revenue the former workers could generate through their billable hours. The downstream effects of this approach will cause WCF hourly rates to rise and render our depots, arsenals, and shipyards unable to maintain their assumed productivity and yield rate (the work they generate and the hours they bill the customer). Output would be reduced, and reliance on private industry for depot-level repair work would increase, at higher rates than our depots charge. Put quite simply, we have reason to believe that these limitations on recruitment will increase rather than reduce costs to the U.S. taxpayer over time.

At a time when the federal government’s workforce is already rapidly aging, the DoD needs as many young skilled technicians as possible to maintain, equip, and support next-generation weapon systems. Our depots, shipyards, arsenals, and maintenance facilities already struggle to keep up with increasingly competitive hiring environments in the private sector. Hamstringing the DoD here risks the viability of our legacy systems as an effective deterrent against our peer adversaries and competitors. It also will prevent our industrial facilities from completing their necessary workload on time and will undoubtedly funnel more work into the hands of private contractors who don’t ultimately answer to American national security interests and readiness timelines.

The DoD needs to unlock every tool at its disposal to generate new talent, particularly from the retired military community who already possess many of these technical skills and active security clearances. Our deterrence capabilities against adversaries like the Chinese Communist Party depend on it.

Thank you for your time and attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,



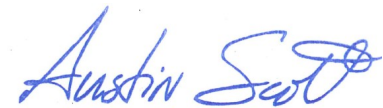
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Tom Cole
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Pat Fallon
Member of Congress



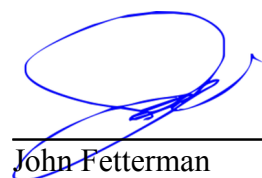
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Michael Cloud
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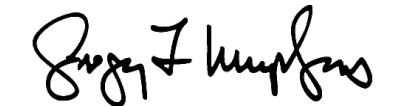
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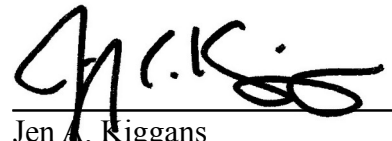
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Celeste Maloy
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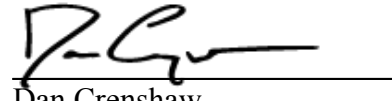
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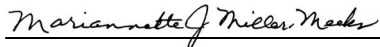
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Radewagen
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CC Mr. Charles Ezell, Acting Director, U.S. Office of Personnel Management