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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

CONSERVATION, RESEARCH,
AND BIOTECHNOLOGY;
GENERAL FARM COMMODITIES,
RISK MANAGEMENT AND CREDIT;
COMMODITY MARKETS, DIGITAL ASSETS,
AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

RANKING MEMBER
TECHNOLOGY MODERNIZATION

August 11, 2025

The Honorable Douglas A. Collins
Secretary
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Ave NW
Washington, D.C. 20420

Dear Secretary Collins,

I write to express my grave concerns regarding the high volume of departures of employees, including those who serve in veteran-facing and mission critical roles, across the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). To that end, I request detailed data regarding the VA workforce to assess the impact of attrition on veteran access to care and benefits in Central and Southern Illinois.

You have repeatedly stated in congressional hearings and other public appearances that the changes you are making at VA will not impact the delivery of care and benefits to veterans. However, the July issue of VA's Workforce Dashboard shows that, for this fiscal year, VA has realized a net loss of approximately 7,500 employees in veteran-facing roles. By comparison, during the same period in FY 2024, VA **added** a net 8,700 employees.¹ The current number of employee losses under your leadership includes mission-essential jobs. Specifically, you have lost over 2,129 registered nurses, 1,283 medical support assistants, 751 physicians, and 1,294 veteran claim examiners.

Your actions as Secretary are negatively impacting the VA workforce. Your announcement on August 6, 2025, that VA is terminating most collective bargaining agreements, in apparent retaliation against members of the American Federation of Government Employees and other unions, undercuts not just the VA workforce but also veteran care. Unions don't just ensure fair work hours and safe staffing minimums; they are also an essential channel to address patient safety issues and improve care. I am deeply concerned that in the wake of this decision, even more employees will choose to leave the VA, and fewer prospective employees will choose VA as an employer. This **will** impact veterans' access to benefits and care.

As the representative from Illinois's 13th congressional district, I represent veterans served by both the VA Iliana Health Care System based in Danville, IL (which includes the Decatur VA clinic in my district) and the VA St. Louis Health Care System based in St. Louis, MO (which includes the Springfield VA clinic in my district), as well as NCA sites in Alton, IL and Springfield, IL and VBA sites in Belleville, IL and Champaign, IL. I am requesting more

¹ VA Workforce Dashboard, Issue 27 (July 25, 2025),
<https://www.va.gov/EMPLOYEE/docs/workforce/VA-Workforce-Dashboard-Issue-27.pdf>

detailed information about the current workforce situation affecting the veterans in my district. Specifically, I am requesting data on **all employee departures** from January 1, 2025, through August 11, 2025, within the VA Iliana and St. Louis Health Care Systems, as well as the VBA and NCA facilities serving Illinois's 13th district. The data should include:

- Occupation
- Job title
- Grade and step level
- Veteran status
- Disability status
- Military spouse status
- Years in service at VA
- Facility/location
- Reason for departure
- Whether the employee was retirement-eligible
- Whether the employee participated in the Deferred Resignation Program (DRP)
- Whether the employee was terminated
- Whether the employee resigned

I also request **detailed data on the number and type of veteran appointments cancelled or rescheduled due to staffing shortages** in the VA Iliana and St. Louis Health Care Systems since January 1, 2025.

This information is critical to understanding VA workforce trends and ensuring the health care needs of veterans in Central and Southern Illinois continue to be met.

I urge your prompt attention to this request and look forward to your detailed response by September 2, 2025.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Nikki Budzinski".

Nikki Budzinski
Member of Congress (IL-13)