

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

February 2, 2017

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

On behalf of New Mexicans, we write to express our deep concern about the damage a federal hiring freeze will have on essential services in our state. We urge you to evaluate the full consequences of your January 23, 2017, Memorandum Regarding the Hiring Freeze and make immediate changes to ensure fundamental government services are not negatively impacted.

We share the goal of increasing the efficiency of federal resources and delivering the best public services possible. However, experience from previous federal hiring freezes tells us that they are counter-productive, increase costs, and only serve to further privatize government jobs. When Presidents Carter and Reagan pursued similar policies, it led to higher government costs and ineffective management as reported by the non-partisan Government Accountability Office. Upon further reflection, you would find that the federal civilian workforce has been flat – around 2.6 million – for decades, at about the same number of employees in the 1970s. As a percent of the total workforce, federal employment has declined sharply from 4.0 percent in 1970 to 1.9 percent today, while at the same time providing many more services and increasing productivity for the taxpayers.

Despite the guidance provided by the Office of Management and Budget on January 31, 2017, the memorandum is creating chaos and uncertainty over how and where exemptions will impact the thousands of people looking to serve as civilian employees. This disproportionately impacts our nation's veterans as they transition to civil service. Nearly one in three federal employees is a veteran. Although their applications would otherwise receive a veterans' preference, it counts for nothing if the positions are subject to a hiring freeze. Adequate flexibility and further clarification on the boundaries and limitations of the hiring freeze is necessary to ensure minimal disruption of federal services.

In New Mexico, we are already hearing from constituents telling us how this order is having a detrimental effect on hiring for key positions, many of which are related to science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields. A hiring freeze disrupts recruitment of highly-qualified STEM graduates from our universities, in turn jeopardizing our nation's security and competitiveness. These positions include recruitment for educators on tribal lands, protection of our borders, monitoring the safety of our food supply, managing public lands and mineral leasing, and fulfilling our promise to our veterans.

Our military is weakened by uncertainty about the future of its civilian workforce. Thousands of civilians in New Mexico work in support of our military. The exemption to the federal hiring freeze only applies to uniformed military personnel, which ignores the thousands of civilians who work in support of our military. A federal hiring freeze puts at risk more than 300 jobs in New Mexico, including over 125 civilian positions in support of the Army, Navy, Marines and Air Force, and at least 32 at the Department of Veterans Affairs. Under the freeze, hiring managers at our military bases are no longer able to recruit and hire New Mexicans for potentially hundreds of important careers in research, development, testing, and evaluation of critical tools necessary for our national security.

Regardless of party, we all want to get America back to work, but as a direct consequence of this action, thousands of Americans are now uncertain about the future of their careers. These lost jobs will impact federal employees not just in Washington but across all 50 states. The effect will especially be felt in New Mexico, where our three Air Force bases, major Department of Energy facilities, Army Missile Range, and federal land management agencies are significant contributors to their local economies and communities. We find this policy to be ill-conceived and deserving of further consideration. We ask that you promptly reverse this policy. Should the hiring freeze stay in place, we urge you to take immediate action to ensure that essential government programs are able to operate without counterproductive obstruction that harm services for the American people.

Sincerely,



Tom Udall
United States Senator



Ben Ray Lujan
United States Representative



Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



Michelle Lujan Grisham
United States Representative