

January X, 2016

President-Elect Donald J. Trump
Trump Tower
725 5th Avenue
New York, NY 10022

Dear President-Elect Trump:

We are writing to respectfully request that you reconsider your proposal to implement a so-called “federal hiring freeze” across the federal government.

On October 22, 2016, you announced that on your first day in office, the Trump Administration will pursue a “*hiring freeze on all federal employees to reduce federal workforce through attrition...*”¹ While you indicated that your plan would exclude “*military, public safety, and public health employees,*” the nature and extent of these exemptions remain unclear. In support of this proposal, your presidential campaign issued a statement asserting that “*[i]n the long term, a smaller federal workforce will mean a more honest and effective government, in which it is harder to hide corruption.*”²

We are strongly concerned that a government-wide hiring freeze would have precisely the opposite effect for several reasons.

Firstly, the impact of hiring freezes enacted during previous Democratic and Republican Administrations demonstrates that such measures have not, in fact, significantly reduced the size of our federal workforce or enhanced federal government operations.³ Rather, they have served to decrease efficiency, transparency, and accountability government-wide at the expense of the public safety and American taxpayer dollars.⁴ Similar to your proposal, these hiring freezes also included general human safety and other exemptions.⁵

In 1982, GAO issued a seminal audit report, entitled “*Recent Government-Wide Hiring Freezes Prove Ineffective in Managing Federal Employment,*” that is still referenced as an

¹ Donald J. Trump, *Contract with the American Voter* (October 22, 2016) (online at <https://assets.donaldjtrump.com/landings/contract/O-TRU-102316-Contractv02.pdf>).

² *Trump Links Hire Freeze to Fighting Corruption*, The Washington Post (October 22, 2016) (online at https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/powerpost/wp/2016/10/24/trump-links-federal-hiring-freeze-to-fighting-corruption/?utm_term=.be258c6f9f03).

³ Government Accountability Office, *Recent Government-Wide Hiring Freezes Prove Ineffective in Managing Federal Employment* (March 10, 1982) (online at <http://www.gao.gov/assets/140/137055.pdf>).

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ *Id.*

authority in federal workforce management today.⁶ In reviewing a series of hiring freezes implemented during the Carter and Reagan Administrations, GAO concluded that while the freezes “*provided an illusion of control*” over federal workforce levels, they were “*not an effective means of controlling federal employment.*”⁷ Agencies were simply forced to compensate for the inability to hire permanent staff by increasing their employment of temporary and part-time workers.⁸ They also resorted to an extraordinary reliance on private contractors.⁹

GAO also found that the inability to fill vacancies on a permanent basis severely prevented federal workers and agencies from doing their jobs. In particular, “[*b]ecause they ignored individual agencies’ missions, workload, and staffing requirements,*” the hiring freezes disrupted critical agency operations and diminished federal oversight of agency programs.¹⁰ Chief among agency efforts that were undermined by the hiring freezes were pipeline safety monitoring, nuclear safety regulations, and the provision of timely and quality veterans’ healthcare.¹¹ One hiring freeze implemented during the Carter Administration facilitated a clerical staff shortage at a Veterans Affairs Medical Center that required healthcare professionals to perform administrative duties over core job functions; this led to increased patient waiting times and delays in the processing of medical examinations.¹² Similarly, past hiring freezes restricted the independent oversight work performed by Federal Offices of Inspectors General to identify waste, fraud, and abuse in federal spending.¹³

In addition, a government-wide hiring freeze would exacerbate the serious workforce skills challenges facing a federal government that must continue to address a variety of evolving 21st Century issues including cybersecurity, terrorism, economic security, and threats to the public health. Since 2011, GAO has identified the existence of several “*mission-critical skills gaps*” across the Federal Government that pose “*a high risk to the nation because they impede the government from cost effectively serving the public and achieving results.*”¹⁴ The federal jobs associated with mission critical skills gaps include those relating to cybersecurity, science, technology, math, engineering, technology, auditing and inspections, procurement, and other key trades.¹⁵ In order to close the skills gaps for at-risk occupations, GAO has recommended that federal agencies undertake immediate and robust efforts to hire employees with expertise in these areas, especially given that approximately one-third of full time federal workers on board as of the end of Fiscal Year 2015 will be eligible to retire by 2019.¹⁶

Furthermore, a federal hiring freeze would continue to stretch thin a dedicated federal workforce whose employment levels have remained relatively stagnant over the past several

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² *Id.*

¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ Government Accountability Office, “*OPM and Agencies Need to Strengthen Efforts to Identify and Close Mission-Critical Skills Gaps,*” (January 30, 2015) (online at <http://www.gao.gov/assets/670/668202.pdf>).

¹⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶ *Id.*

decades in comparison to the growing American public that it serves. Since the 1960s, our federal workforce has modestly increased by 10% to its current size of approximately 2.5 million employees while the American population has grown over 67% to over 323 million people.¹⁷ Over this same time period, our private sector workforce has increased by roughly 136%.¹⁸ Devastating sequestration cuts, related furloughs, and even a 16-day government shutdown have already strained our federal workforce in recent years. A federal hiring freeze would impose additional constraints on federal agencies and employees who are already operating under difficult budgetary limitations.

For these reasons, we again respectfully urge you to reconsider your proposal to implement an across-the-board federal hiring freeze. We thank you in advance for your consideration of this letter.

Sincerely,

Stephen F. Lynch (MA-08)

¹⁷ The White House, *Analytical Perspectives , Budget of the U.S. Government, Fiscal Year 2017* (February 9, 2016) (online at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/budget/fy2017/assets/spec.pdf>).

¹⁸ *Id.*