



VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS
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CELEBRATING THE LEGACY

Trump administration plans to cut 80,000 employees from Veterans Affairs, according to internal memo

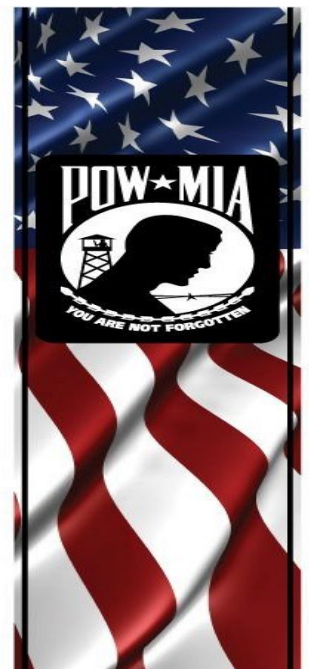
BY [STEPHEN GROVES](#) Updated 4:45 PM CT, March 5,

The Department of Veterans Affairs is planning a reorganization that includes cutting over 80,000 jobs from the sprawling agency that [provides health care and other services for millions of veterans](#), according to an internal memo obtained Wednesday by The Associated Press.

The VA's chief of staff, Christopher Syrek, told top-level officials at the agency Tuesday that it had an objective to cut enough employees to return to 2019 staffing levels of just under 400,000. That would require terminating tens of thousands of employees after the VA expanded during the Biden administration, as well as to cover veterans impacted by burn pits under the 2022 PACT Act.

The [memo](#) instructs top-level staff to prepare for an agency-wide reorganization in August to "resize and tailor the workforce to the mission and revised structure." It also calls for agency officials to work with the White House's Department of Government Efficiency to "move out aggressively, while taking a pragmatic and disciplined approach" to the Trump administration's goals. Government Executive first reported on the internal memo.

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"Things need to change," Veterans Affairs Secretary Doug Collins said in a video posted on social media Wednesday afternoon, adding that the layoffs would not mean cuts to veterans' health care or benefits.

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"This administration is finally going to give the veterans what they want," Collins said. "President Trump has a mandate for generational change in Washington and that's exactly what we're going to deliver at the VA."

Veterans have already been [speaking out against](#) the cuts at the VA that so far had included a few thousand employees and hundreds of contracts. More than 25% of the VA's workforce is comprised of veterans.

The plans underway at the VA showed how the Trump administration's DOGE initiative, led by billionaire [Elon Musk](#), is not holding back on an all-out effort to slash federal agencies, even for those that have traditionally enjoyed bipartisan support.

White House spokeswoman Anna Kelly said in a statement that the president "refuses to accept the VA bureaucracy and bloat that has hindered veterans' ability to receive timely and quality care." She added that the changes would "ensure greater efficiency and transparency" at the VA.

The VA last year experienced its highest-ever service levels, reaching over 9 million enrollees and delivering more than 127.5 million health care appointments, according to the agency's figures.

However, Michael Missal, who was the VA's inspector general for nine years until he was fired last month as part of Trump's [sweeping dismissal](#) of independent oversight officials at government agencies, told the AP that the VA is already suffering from a lack of "expertise" as top-level officials either leave or are shuffled around under the president's plans.

"What's going to happen is VA's not going to perform as well for veterans, and veterans are going to get harmed," said Missal, who was a guest of Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn. at Trump's Tuesday [address to Congress](#).

Rather than leaning on the missions of inspectors general, whose job is to search out waste and fraud at government agencies, Trump has moved forcefully against them, flouting statutes that require a 30-day notice and specific reasons for their dismissals. Missal is [challenging his dismissal](#) in court alongside seven other fired inspectors general.

Missal described the VA as "a really complicated, hard to manage organization" that is similar in size to the largest corporations in America. He defended his work at the agency as committed to make it more efficient and responsive to veterans. By Missal's count, the VA inspector general's oversight resulted in \$45 billion being saved at the agency during his tenure.

But he added that Trump's actions against the inspectors general is making it more difficult for the officials still in those offices to do their jobs.

In Congress, Democrats have decried the cuts at the VA and other agencies, while Republicans have so far watched with caution the Trump administration's changes.

Rep. Mike Bost, the Republican chair of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, said in a statement that he would "continue to ask questions and keep a close eye on how, or if, this plan evolves."

"I have questions about the impact these reductions and discussions could have on the delivery of services, especially following the implementation of the PACT Act," Bost added.

Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, the Republican chair of the Senate Budget Committee, was displeased the VA had not given lawmakers an advance notification of the changes, saying it was "political malpractice not to consult Congress."

"Maybe you've got a good reason to do it," he said. "But we don't need to be reading memos in the paper about a 20% cut at the VA."

The changes underway at the VA are already prompting worry among veterans groups as they face layoffs and confusion about whether their services will be affected.

Brent Reiffer, a Marine veteran who receives medical care through the VA and advocates with the Wounded Warrior Project, said that among his community "confusion that leads to frustration" is setting in.

"If you draw that to a conclusion sometimes, it's the veteran just throws the hands up and sort of doesn't go to the VA," Reiffer said. "What you end up with is a lot of veterans that are not getting the care that they deserve."

Blumenthal, the top Democrat on the Senate committee that oversees veteran's affairs, said in a statement that the Trump administration "has launched an all-out assault" against progress the VA has made in expanding its services as the number of covered veterans grows and includes those impacted by toxic burn pits.

"Their plan prioritizes private sector profits over veterans' care, balancing the budget on the backs of those who served. It's a shameful betrayal, and veterans will pay the price for their unforgivable corruption, incompetence, and immorality," Blumenthal said in a statement.

Democratic leaders in the House also spotlighted the impact of Trump's cuts on veterans Wednesday.

Rep. Katherine Clark, the No. 2 ranked in House Democratic leadership, said at a news conference, "Democrats are here to say in unison we will not allow our veterans to be defined as government waste."

Congressional Statement of VFW National Commander Alfred J. "Al" Lipphardt

March 04, 2025

**Statement of
Alfred (Al) J. Lipphardt
Commander-in-Chief
Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States**

**Before the
Joint Hearing
Committees on Veterans' Affairs
United States Senate and United States House of Representatives**

Washington, D.C.

Chairmen Moran and Bost, Ranking Members Blumenthal and Takano, members of the Senate and House Committees on Veterans' Affairs, it is my honor to be with you today on behalf of the more than 1.4 million members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW) and its Auxiliary—America's largest war veterans organization.

While the benefits we afford our all-volunteer force may seem generous to those who never raised their right hand and took the Oath of Enlistment, these benefits are simply the warranty of the all-volunteer service contract—DD Form 4—each of us signed before we put on the uniform. In addition to the service member's obligations, each contract explicitly entitles the service member to certain benefits as a result of honorable service. This is why the VFW calls on our nation to honor the contract. Section 9 of this document today includes the following—

“a. My enlistment/reenlistment agreement is more than an employment agreement. It effects a change in status from civilian to military member of the Armed Forces. As a member of the Armed Forces of the United States, I will be:

1. Required to obey all lawful orders and perform all assigned duties.
2. Subject to separation during or at the end of my enlistment. If my behavior fails to meet acceptable military standards, I may be discharged and given a certificate for less than honorable service, which may hurt my future job opportunities and my claim for veterans' benefits.
3. Subject to the military justice system, which means, among other things, that I may be tried by military courts-martial.
4. Required upon order to serve in combat or other hazardous situations.
5. Entitled to receive pay, allowances, and other benefits as provided by law and regulation.”

This is not charity. This is a contract. Everyone who served honorably, like every member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, has honored our end of the contract. We call on our leaders to do the same.



March 2025

April 2025						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
30	31	1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	1	2	3

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
23	24	25	26	27	28	1
2	3	4	5 Ash Wednesday Food Distribution	6	7	8
9 Daylight Saving Starts	10 VFW Meeting	11	12	13	14	15
16	17 Saint Patrick's Day	18	19	20	21	22 Gun Raffle 1400
23	24 VPR Kosovo Campaign	25	26	27	28	29
30	31 VPR Somalia	1 April Fool's Day	2	3	4	5

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April 2025

May 2025						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
27	28	29	30	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
30	31	1 April Fool's Day	2 Food Distribution	3	4	5
6	7	8 VFW Meeting	9	10	11	12
13 Palm Sunday	14	15	16	17 Maundy Thursday	18 Good Friday	19
20 Easter	21	22 Earth Day	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	1	2	3

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