

EUGENE VINDMAN
7TH DISTRICT, VIRGINIA

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CYBER, INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES, AND
INNOVATION
SUBCOMMITTEE ON SEAPOWERS AND PROJECTION FORCES
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CONSERVATION, RESEARCH, AND
BIOTECHNOLOGY
SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMMODITY MARKETS, DIGITAL ASSETS, AND
RURAL DEVELOPMENT



UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

1005 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
202-225-2815

2241 D TACKETTS MILL DRIVE
WOODBIDGE, VA 22192
703-987-2180

1701 FALL HILL AVENUE UNIT 104
FREDERICKSBURG, VA 22401
540-321-6130

VINDMAN.HOUSE.GOV

April 10, 2025

The Honorable Doug Collins
Secretary of Veterans Affairs
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Secretary Collins,

On February 28, 2025, I had the privilege of attending the ribbon cutting ceremony for the brand-new Fredericksburg Health Care Center. Upon opening, this center was slated to become the largest VA Health Care Center in the nation. With 72,000 veterans in the Seventh District, and a total of 685,503 across Virginia, there is tremendous demand and need for these services in the heart of my district. This care center is more than just a building — it is a promise. A promise to the men and women who have served our country that they will receive the care, dignity, and support they so rightly deserve.

Unfortunately, the administration has broken that promise. Last month it signed a continuing resolution that cut \$23 billion from the Toxic Exposures Fund for veterans suffering from burn pits, Agent Orange, and other toxic exposures. To date, the new facility is only staffed at one third of its capacity. The administration has issued its legally dubious “fork in the road” that encouraged federal employees to leave. The VA has also terminated 2,400 probationary employees and is planning to lay off at least 80,000 more staff as part of the Trump administration’s effort to reduce the size of the federal workforce. While the administration claimed to exempt the VA from its hiring freeze, OPM locked out human resources officials from new hire records without approval from senior leadership at OPM making it impossible to hire. The atmosphere of fear the administration has created by putting current VA employees on notice that it is cutting 80,000 employees is hardly the way to encourage new employees to sign up.

However, I am confident that people want or at least wanted to work at this new VA. In December there was a career fair for the VA where over 1,000 qualified applicants participated. The workforce is there. We have the ability to serve veterans, but only if OPM and the administration do their job. What we have seen in the meantime is not the way to help veterans, it is not the way to honor their sacrifices, and it is certainly not the way to ensure they receive the

timely, high-quality care they need and deserve. In short, it is the opposite of government efficiency.

Veterans in my district are already experiencing delays in scheduling appointments, accessing specialists, and receiving essential mental health services. Your own press release advertised how this new facility would serve more than 35,000 veterans each year and create up to 900 new jobs.¹ But so far these boasts have only proved to be hollow promises. The staffing shortages at the Fredericksburg Health Care Center will only exacerbate these issues, leading to longer wait times and reduced care options for the very people who have served and sacrificed for our nation.

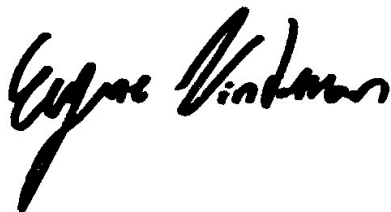
Given these concerns, I respectfully ask for clarification on the following:

1. What is the Department of Veterans Affairs' plan to address the immediate staffing shortages at the Fredericksburg Health Care Center?
2. How does the VA intend to mitigate the impact of the hiring freeze on critical health care services for veterans nationwide?
3. What criteria is the administration using to determine which positions are subject to layoffs, and what safeguards are in place to ensure veterans' care is not compromised?
4. Has the VA conducted an assessment of the potential effects that staffing reductions will have on wait times and the overall quality of care? If so, what were the findings?
5. What steps is the VA taking to ensure that rural and underserved veterans, like many in my district, are not disproportionately affected by these workforce reductions?

I urge you to take immediate action to fully staff the Fredericksburg Health Care Center and all VA health care facilities across the country. Our veterans cannot afford to wait, and we cannot afford to break our commitment to them.

I appreciate your prompt attention to this urgent matter and look forward to your response on how the Department of Veterans Affairs intends to address these staffing shortages.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eugene Vindman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Eugene Vindman
Member of Congress

¹ Press Release, Department of Veterans Affairs, VA Celebrates Opening of Fredericksburg Health Care Center (Feb. 28, 2025), <https://www.va.gov/richmond-health-care/news-releases/fredericksburg-va-health-care-center-grand-opening/>.