

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 7, 2025

The Honorable Russell Vought
Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th St., NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Director Vought:

As Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on the Budget, which has jurisdiction over the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), I am writing regarding the February 26, 2025, memorandum sent by you and the Acting Director of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) instructing the heads of federal agencies to send Phase 1 Agency RIF and Reorganization Plans (ARRP) for initiating “large-scale reductions in force” to OMB and OPM by no later than March 13, 2025.¹ Further, agencies must submit their Phase 2 ARRP by April 14, 2025, detailing workforce reductions, relocations, and efficiency improvements; including plans for organizational restructuring, personnel reviews, hiring limits, and cost-saving measures. Agencies are required to provide monthly progress reports to OMB and OPM through July 2025.

The February 26 memo’s directives enable further disastrous mass firings of federal employees. The Trump administration has already fired tens of thousands of civil servants at several agencies, many of which have been deemed illegal by the courts.² So far, federal courts have ordered the Trump administration to reinstate nearly 25,000 illegally terminated federal workers from agencies such as the Department of Health and Human Services and the Treasury Department.³

Current and proposed cuts threaten the welfare of communities across the country that rely on essential government services, such as Social Security benefits and veterans’ health care. With staffing already at a 50-year low, the Social Security Administration (SSA) has announced plans to cut up to 12 percent of its workforce, which could lead to severe destabilization of the

¹ Memorandum from Russell T. Vought, Director, Office of Management and Budget and Charles Ezell, Acting Director, Office of Personnel Management to Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies (Feb. 26, 2025), www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/latest-memos/guidance-on-agency-rif-and-reorganization-plans-requested-by-implementing-the-president-s-department-of-government-efficiency-workforce-optimization-initiative.pdf.

² Salvador Rizzo, *Judge blocks Trump administration’s mass firings of federal workers*, WASH. POST (Feb. 27, 2025), www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2025/02/27/judge-probationary-federal-employee-firings-lawsuit/; Derek Saul, *Here’s Where Trump’s Government Layoffs Are Targeted—As Veterans Affairs Reportedly Plans Thousands of Cuts*, FORBES (Mar. 5, 2025), www.forbes.com/sites/saradorn/2025/03/05/heres-where-trumps-governmentlayoffs-are-targeted-as-veterans-affairs-reportedly-plans-thousands-of-cuts/.

³ Ali Abbas Ahmadi, *Trump administration reinstating nearly 25,000 fired federal workers*, BBC (Mar. 19, 2025), <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cy7x382je03o>.

agency's infrastructure, triggering processing delays and threats to seniors' access to benefits.⁴ A SSA memo detailing the agency's plans for proposed changes warns of "service disruption," "operational strain," and harm to "vulnerable populations."⁵ Just last year, the Department of Veterans Affairs aimed to fill 66,000 vacancies—now, the agency plans to *cut* 83,000 jobs, extending wait times for veterans' health care and deteriorating access to social services like the Veterans Crisis Line.⁶

These sweeping workforce reductions will not only strain agency operations and delay critical services for seniors and veterans, but they will also harm the government's efforts to protect public health, conserve natural resources, and manage federal lands. The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) plan to cut its Office of Research and Development will result in over 1,000 layoffs, undermining the EPA's protection of public health and the environment by eroding our nation's air and water quality.⁷ The U.S. Forest Service has already laid off approximately 3,400 employees, and the National Park Service fired approximately 1,000 employees, which severely threatens wildfire response and prevention, and federal land management across the country, including my home state of Oregon.⁸

Unfortunately, the list of reckless firings provided here is far from exhaustive. These mass firings will not only undermine the ability of federal agencies to fulfill their missions but will also further erode public trust in government services. Beyond the immediate consequences, the large-scale purging of civil servants continues to expose the federal workforce to an unprecedented level of political interference.

As previous firings have shown, these plans may target experienced professionals whose expertise is crucial to maintaining stability in agencies, ensuring that hard-working families do not suffer. In fact, during your confirmation hearing before the Senate Budget Committee, you insisted that you did not seek to traumatize the federal workforce and that this administration was focused only on addressing "weaponized bureaucracy." You stated that there was no "intent to fire career civil servants" and that you "value the work that they do." Yet, the February 26 memo orders agencies to provide plans for further removals of career staff, subjecting employees to at-will firing decisions with no advance notice or opportunity for recourse.

⁴ Tara S. Bernard, *Social Security Employees Warn of Damage From DOGE*, N.Y. TIMES (Mar. 17, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/17/business/social-security-doge-ssa.html>.

⁵ Shahar Ziv, *Social Security Identity Verification Could Deny Or Delay Benefits For Millions*, FORBES (Mar. 19, 2025), <https://www.forbes.com/sites/shaharziv/2025/03/19/social-security-anti-fraud-plan-could-deny-benefits-for-millions/>.

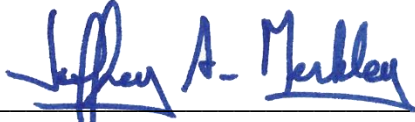
⁶ Jamie Rowen, *5 Reasons Federal Cuts Are Hitting Veterans Especially Hard*, PBS NEWSHOUR (Mar. 16, 2025), <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/5-reasons-federal-cuts-are-hitting-veterans-especially-hard>; Stephen Groves, *Trump administration plans to cut 80,000 employees from VA*, ASSOCIATED PRESS (Mar. 5, 2025), <https://apnews.com/article/veterans-affairs-cuts-doge-musk-trump-f587a6bc3db6a460e9c357592e165712>.

⁷ Matthew Daly, *EPA plans to cut scientific research program, could fire more than 1,000 employees*, ASSOCIATED PRESS (Mar. 18, 2025), <https://apnews.com/article/epa-science-layoffs-trump-doge-8a5743b9281e3f82afdf2cdd5f972d5f>; Tracy J. Wholf, *Hundreds of EPA scientists expected to be fired in more Trump administration cuts*, CBS NEWS (Mar. 18, 2025), <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/epa-ord-scientists-research-trump-administration-cuts/>.

⁸ Andrew Hay, *US Forest Service fires 3,400 workers, Park Service cuts 1,000*, REUTERS (Feb. 14, 2025), <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-forest-service-fires-3400-workers-park-service-cuts-1000-2025-02-14/>.

Therefore, I am requesting all documents that OMB has already received, as well as documents received in the future, from agencies and departments in response to the February 26 memo. This includes but is not limited to Phase I and Phase II ARRs, as well as the subsequent monthly updates. For documents already in OMB's possession, please provide them to the Budget Committee no later than **April 14, 2025**. For documents not yet received, please provide them to the Committee immediately after OMB's receipt.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jeffrey A. Merkley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Jeffrey A. Merkley
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on the Budget