

RAÚL M. GRIJALVA  
7TH DISTRICT OF ARIZONA

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE  
RANKING MEMBER EMERITUS

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON EARLY CHILDHOOD, ELEMENTARY, AND  
SECONDARY EDUCATION

SUBCOMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE  
DEVELOPMENT

CONGRESSIONAL PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS  
CHAIR EMERITUS

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

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March 4, 2025

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Jennifer S. Gutowski MHA, FACHE  
Director  
VA Southern Arizona Health Care  
3601 South Sixth Avenue  
Tucson, AZ 85723-0001

Dear Director Gutowski,

Thank you for your dedicated work in supporting and caring for our veterans in Southern Arizona. I am writing to express my concern about the recent dismissal of over 2,400 Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) employees, including critical roles performed by veterans, military spouses, and other dedicated staff members. As you know, these dismissals come as the VA continues to attempt to hire for more than 300,000 positions. This decision has raised important questions about the future of services and care for our veterans, as well as its impact on their families and the wider community.

Specifically, I am writing to better understand the impacts on Southern Arizona VA Health Care System (SAVAHCS) and would greatly appreciate a written response on the following key issues related to these terminations and how they may directly affect the services provided:

1. **Call Volumes and Response Times:** Can you provide data on current call volumes and response times for veteran inquiries across various services? How has the termination of VA employees impacted these metrics? We are particularly concerned about the quality of care and the timely responses to veterans seeking assistance.
2. **Impact on Service Delivery:** How does the SAVAHCS plan to address any gaps in service delivery caused by the loss of these employees, particularly in healthcare, claims processing, and direct care roles? Please provide details on any plans to compensate for this loss through outsourcing, contracts, or other means.
3. **Veteran Support:** How has this mass dismissal impacted the quality of medical research, claims processing, and direct care for veterans in our region? What measures are being taken to ensure veterans' needs are still being met without disruption?
4. **Exemptions and Personnel Changes:** How are mission-critical positions defined within the VA, and what criteria were used to determine which employees were exempted from dismissal? How are you addressing the need for continuity in care, particularly among the remaining probationary employees in critical roles?
5. **Plans Moving Forward:** What steps are being taken to ensure the smooth transition of duties and continuity of care? Can you provide any guidance or detailed plans on how the VA will continue to meet the needs of our veterans moving forward?

I have also written to VA Secretary Collins expressing my concern over his statement celebrating the dismissal of Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) employees. Among those dismissed were 100% service-connected disabled veterans, military spouses, lifesaving researchers, and more. I know SAVAHCS works hard to attract and retain employees to provide high quality care to Arizona veterans, and I am concerned these arbitrary terminations will impact your ability to serve them.

The questions above will help Congress understand the ongoing impact of these terminations and how SAVAHCS is planning to ensure that the health and well-being of our veterans remain a top priority. I respectfully request your prompt response to these concerns, along with any further reporting you feel is appropriate for Congress to consider regarding the terminations and your employment needs.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to your response and working together to ensure our veterans continue to receive the quality of care and service they have earned.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Raúl M. Grijalva". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "R".

Raúl M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress