

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 26, 2017

The Honorable James Mattis
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Mattis:

We write to express our concern regarding the Presidential Memorandum issued January 23, 2017 concerning a hiring freeze of Federal civilian employees. We believe a hiring freeze may have a severe and adverse impact on the ability of the Navy and public shipyards to meet critical national security requirements and we urge you to immediately exempt all Department of Navy shipyard civilian employees.

The Memorandum states that the freeze does not apply to “military personnel” or positions considered essential to meet national security responsibilities. The civilian men and women who support the Navy provide mission critical maintenance to ensure the Navy can meet security requirements around the world, and should thus be granted an exception.


Our request to exempt Department of Navy shipyard civilian employees from the Presidential Memorandum is not without precedent. In his May 14, 2013, memorandum concerning sequestration-related furloughs, then-Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel exempted Navy shipyard employees because “it would be particularly difficult to make up delays in maintenance work on nuclear vessels and these vessels are critical mission success.” Our public shipyards perform the same mission critical work today and require hiring discretion to meet their workforce needs so this work can be completed without delay.

As you are aware, there is discussion regarding the requirements for a larger Navy to meet current and emerging threats. The Navy has recommended increasing the size of the fleet to 355 ships, up from fewer than 280 ships today. In order to maintain the current fleet and meet future maintenance requirements, we will need more civilians to maintain, repair and overhaul submarines, aircraft carriers and the entire naval fleet. These civilians frequently complete maintenance availabilities ahead of schedule and under budget saving taxpayer dollars and ensuring fleet readiness. The public shipyards are currently hiring hundreds of new employees who must complete years of training before they are able to maintain and repair naval vessels. A civilian hiring freeze at naval shipyards will severely impact this training pipeline resulting in maintenance delays and higher costs. The Presidential Memorandum states that the freeze is not intended to impact national security, however, freezing the hiring of civilian employees who will support critical fleet maintenance will directly undermine national security.

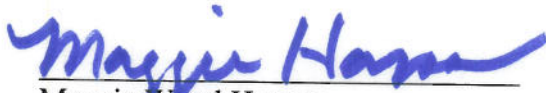
We urge you to consider the impact of the Memorandum on the Navy, public shipyards and national security and issue clear guidance to immediately exempt all Navy shipyard civilians from the hiring freeze.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



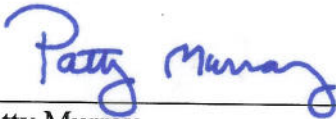
Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



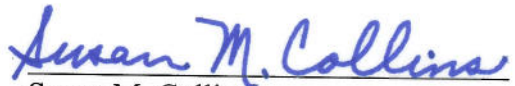
Maggie Wood Hassan
United States Senator



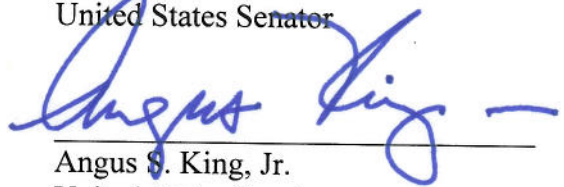
Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



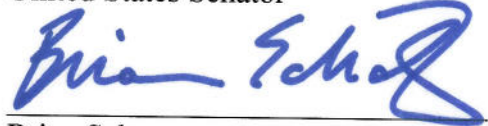
Patty Murray
United States Senator



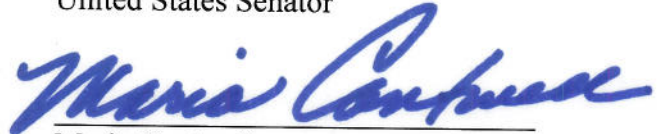
Susan M. Collins
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



Brian Schatz
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator