

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 27, 2017

The Honorable James Mattis
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Mattis,

Congratulations on your recent confirmation as our nation's twenty-sixth Secretary of Defense. We look forward to working with you to ensure our nation's security and the readiness of its armed forces.

We write today to respectfully request that you use your authority to exempt federal civilian positions at our nation's four public shipyards and any other positions that would directly support their mission from President Trump's hiring freeze for government agencies.

We have serious concerns that this Presidential Memorandum will have a damaging impact on jobs that are essential to the readiness of the Navy and our national security.

During your confirmation hearing, you correctly called for strengthening military readiness. The Navy's four public shipyards are the center of gravity when it comes to maintaining our nation's ability to project power, maintain sea lanes, and ensure the timely deployment of ballistic missile submarines. The heart of the shipyards are the dedicated and skilled civilians that maintain our fleet. Without them -- and their counterparts at several supporting facilities -- combatant commanders would be challenged to utilize the capability of aircraft carriers, submarines, and surface combatants.

The Government Accountability Office has confirmed an already known fact; the long-run ability of the shipyards to maintain the fleet depends on the experience of its workforce. Stopping plans to make sure the shipyards are fully staffed does nothing but ensure delayed maintenance and cost overruns down the road. Recognizing these facts, the government has taken steps to maintaining steady operations and invest in the public shipyards. During the 2013 furlough, shipyard employees were exempt. Just last year, their workforce was increased to 33,500 positions to manage the aging and heavily used fleet.

It is critical to the future readiness of our military that you use your authority to waive the impact of the Presidential Memorandum on federal civilian positions at our nation's public shipyards

and those in other supporting commands that directly impact their mission. Moreover, this action will act as a necessary stop-gap until Congress can consider legislation that we plan to introduce next week prohibiting these positions from being impacted by the freeze.

Again, we congratulate you on your position and ask that you honor this request and continue to work with us to protect our national security.

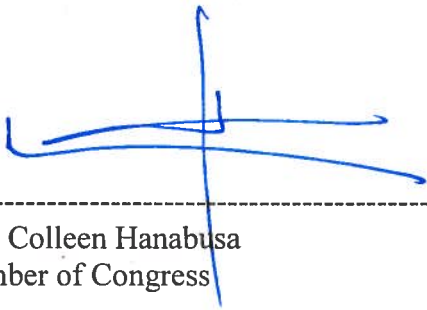
Sincerely,



Derek Kilmer
Member of Congress



Rep. Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Member of Congress



Rep. Colleen Hanabusa
Member of Congress



Rep. Carol Shea-Porter
Member of Congress