United States Senate
COMMITTEE ON BANKING, HOUSING, AND URBAN AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON, DC 20510–6075

October 15, 2025

The Honorable Howard Lutnick
Secretary
Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Secretary Lutnick:

I write today to request information regarding staffing levels at the Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS) and the ability of the agency to comply with its statutory mandates and serve its important national security function.

On Friday, October 10, 2025, Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Director Russel Vought announced sweeping Reduction in Force (RIF) plans across the federal government.[1] Director Vought "provided no further details" regarding the RIFs, though an OMB spokesperson stated that the RIFs—which are layoffs, "not furloughs"—were "substantial."[2] In a court filing, the Administration acknowledged it had sent RIF notices to thousands of employees at the Departments of Treasury, Energy, Housing and Urban Development, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, Commerce, and Education, as well as the Environmental Protection Agency.[3] It also "hinted at the possibility of additional dismissals."[4]

The Trump Administration has sought to construe the RIFs as a "necessary" part of the government shutdown that began on October 1, 2025.[5] This is, of course, false: In recent years, shutdowns under both Republican and Democratic administrations have ended through bipartisan negotiation—not the arbitrary dismantling of federal programs that serve millions of Americans.[6] Furthermore, the shutdown "provides no new legal authority for an agency to engage in

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[1] Politico, "Vought sounds layoff siren: 'The RIFs have begun,'" Irie Sentner and Jennifer Scholtes, October 10, 2025, https://www.politico.com/news/2025/10/10/vought-sounds-layoff-siren-the-rifs-have-begun-00602262.

[2] *Id.*

[3] New York Times, "Trump Says Federal Layoffs Have Begun During Government Shutdown," Tony Romm, October 10, 2025, https://www.nytimes.com/2025/10/10/us/politics/federal-layoffs-government-shutdown.html.

[4] *Id.*

[5] *See* pg. 1 of a draft Office of Management and Budget shared with Politico on September 24, 2025, linked in Politico, "White House to agencies: Prepare mass firing plans for a potential shutdown," Sophia Cai, September 24, 2025, https://www.politico.com/news/2025/09/24/white-house-firings-shutdown-00579909.

[6] Sam Berger,"Administration Plans for Mass Firings in a Shutdown Not Justified by Law or Prudent Management," Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, September 29, 2025, https://www.cbpp.org/research/federal-budget/administration-plans-for-mass-firings-in-a-shutdown-not-justified-by-law-or.

widespread firings."[7] Instead, the Administration's motivations appear purely political. Leading up to the shutdown, the President's threats of mass layoffs were widely understood as an effort to "up[] the ante" of a shutdown for Democrats.[8] And on October 9, 2025, President Trump told his cabinet that he was "only cutting Democrat programs," and "some very popular Democrat programs that aren't popular with Republicans, frankly."[9] The President, in other words, is intentionally using the shutdown to deprive the American public, Democrat and Republican, of services.

These new RIFs, if fully implemented, may have significant implications for BIS's ability to fulfill its important economic and national security mandates once the government reopens. The Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs, of which I am Ranking Member, has jurisdiction over the activities of BIS. To help me better understand the extent to which the President's unnecessary and illegal RIFs will impact the agency's ability to serve the American public if fully implemented, and to inform Congress's exercise of its legislative responsibilities related to the agency, please provide the following information no later than October 22, 2025:

1. An organizational chart describing all relevant divisions, subdivisions, offices, and programs of BIS in effect as of January 20, 2025.

    a. The total number of employees employed at BIS as of January 20, 2025.

    b. The total number of employees employed at each applicable division, subdivision, office, and program of BIS as of January 20, 2025.

2. An organizational chart describing all relevant divisions, subdivisions, offices, and programs of BIS in effect on September 30, 2025, after close of business.

    a. The total number of employees employed at BIS on September 30, 2025, after close of business.

    b. The total number of employees employed at each applicable division, subdivision, office, and program of BIS on September 30, 2025, after close of business.

3. Copies of all RIF notices, plans, and guidance sent to BIS employees on or after October 10, 2025.

    a. The total number of employees that would be employed at BIS, should such RIF plans go into effect.

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[7] *Id.*
[8] Politico, "White House to agencies: Prepare mass firing plans for a potential shutdown," Sophia Cai, September 24, 2025, https://www.politico.com/news/2025/09/24/white-house-firings-shutdown-00579909.
[9] Politico, "Trump promises cuts to programs favored by Democrats," Ben Johansen, October 9, 2025, https://www.politico.com/news/2025/10/09/trump-promises-cuts-democrats-programs-00599884.

b. The total number of employees employed at each applicable division, subdivision, office, and program of BIS, should such RIF plans go into effect.

c. A detailed description of BIS's capacity to comply with its statutory mandates, should all RIFs go into effect.

    i. Provide this information for each division, subdivision, office, and program, as well as each statutorily required function of the agency.

4. Copies of all RIF and Reorganization Plans (ARRPs) relevant to BIS submitted by the Commerce Department to OMB and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), pursuant to the February 11, 2025, Executive Order entitled, "Implementing The President's 'Department of Government Efficiency' Workforce Optimization Initiative" and the February 26, 2025, OMB memorandum implementing such order.[10] Specifically, provide:

    a. The "Phase 1 ARRPs," and any accompanying materials, due to OPM and OMB on March 13, 2025.

    b. The "Phase 2 ARRPs," and any accompanying materials, due to OPM and OMB on April 14, 2025.

    c. The "monthly progress reports," and any accompanying materials, due to OPM and OMB on May 14, 2025, June 16, 2025, and July 16, 2025.

    d. Analysis of how the ARRP plans submitted to OMB and OPM interact with any RIF notices described in (3).

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Warren
Ranking Member
Committee on Banking,
Housing, and Urban Affairs

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[10] 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, regarding Guidance on Agency RIF and Reorganization Plans Requested by *Implementing The President's "Department of Government Efficiency" Workforce Optimization Initiative*, February 26, 2025, https://www.opm.gov/chcoc/latest-memos/guidance-on-agency-rif-and-reorganization-plans-requested-by-implementing-the-president-s-department-of-government-efficiency-workforce-optimization-initiative.pdf.