President Donald Trump signed a presidential memorandum freezing federal government hiring, potentially damaging FDA’s efforts to fill 1,000 vacancies at the agency if FDA jobs are not exempted under the memo’s clause exempting personnel needed for public safety or those deemed by the Office of Personnel Management chief as “otherwise necessary.” Questions remain over how the memorandum will affect FDA.

Political appointees are not affected by the hiring freeze.

The freeze fulfills a promise Trump laid out in his Contract with the American Voter to reduce the federal workforce through attrition, saying that he would impose “a hiring freeze on all federal employees to reduce the federal workforce through attrition (exempting military, public safety, and public health).” During the signing of the memorandum, Trump noted that the memorandum exempted military hiring, but did not specify if public health workers would be included in the exemption.

The memorandum leaves potentially wide berth for federal agencies to exempt positions from the hiring freeze. “The head of any executive department or agency may exempt from the hiring freeze any positions that it deems necessary to meet national security or public safety responsibilities. In addition, the Director of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) may grant exemptions from this freeze where those exemptions are otherwise necessary,” the memorandum states.

The memo states that no new positions may be filled or created as of noon on January 20, 2017, and adds that contracting outside of the federal government is not permitted to circumvent the intent of the memorandum.

The memo also asks the heads of the White House Office of Management & Budget and Office of Personnel Management to recommend a plan to reduce the federal workforce through attrition within 90 days.