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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515-6015

May 30, 2014

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TELEPHONE:
(202) 225-2771

The Honorable Sloan Gibson
Acting Secretary, Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20420

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Along with every Member of Congress, we are shocked and deeply upset by Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) actions documented in the May 28, 2014 VA Inspector General (IG) report on patient scheduling waitlists and their impact on patient care. The IG report indicates that these problems are systemic and longstanding. Immediate action is needed to end this unacceptable situation, and get every veteran that has been waiting immediate access to medical care.

We request an immediate review of all waiting lists at each VA healthcare facility. We expect you to use all resources and authorities at your disposal, to include increased use of non-VA care to ensure that all veterans on these lists receive care within the next 30 days. We expect you to prioritize this care based on the seriousness of the veteran's medical condition, ensuring that veterans with urgent medical needs are seen immediately. We will expect confirmation that this has been completed by June 30, 2014.

We also request that you provide us an initial, and subsequently, quarterly reports describing your implementation of the IG recommendations in the May 28 report.

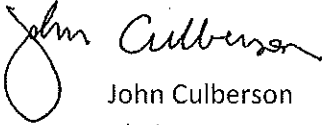
Former Secretary Eric Shinseki, indicated in our appropriations hearing this spring that he had adequate authority to reward and punish VA employees for favorable or incompetent performance. Dr. Petzel said,

"We hire people. We train them. We tell them what they are accountable to do. And when they don't perform as they are supposed to or when they complete criminal acts or malfeasance, we do indeed hold them accountable. Last year over 3,000 employees were released from the VA, fired, in your terms."

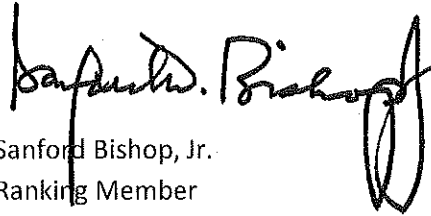
We expect you to use your authority to discipline employees responsible for the scheduling waitlist controversy. We request that you provide us with information on which VA employees you are holding accountable for their participation in the waitlist manipulation schemes, and what employment actions (demotions, firings, salary reductions, etc.) you have taken against these employees.

We look forward to your prompt response to our requests. We believe you have the tools and the resources necessary to resolve the terrible problems identified by the IG and expect you to use them without further delay.

Sincerely,



John Culberson
Chairman
Subcommittee on Military Construction and
Veterans Affairs



Sanford Bishop, Jr.
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Military
Construction and Veterans Affairs