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*If Veterans don't help Veterans, who will?*

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# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 30, 2014

Mr. Richard Griffin  
Acting Inspector General  
Department of Veterans Affairs  
Office of Inspector General  
810 Vermont Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20420

Dear Acting Inspector General Griffin:

We wish to convey our serious concerns regarding the allegations of mismanagement and neglect at the Phoenix VA Health Care System (PVAHCS) as well as request a briefing and regular updates on the investigation being conducted by your office.

As you know, *The Arizona Republic* published a report on April 10, 2014 that included allegations that as many as 40 deaths may be linked to delayed medical care at PVAHCS. This report, written after revelations were made public at a House Veterans' Affairs Committee hearing by Chairman Jeff Miller, also alleges that PVAHCS staff may have been misusing the Electronic Waiting List (EWL) system, which is used by all VA Health Centers. It has been suggested that PVAHCS staff may have used a non-official electronic list to queue veterans until an appointment became available in a timeframe that would reflect positively on the agency, at which point they were transferred to the official waiting list. If true, an obvious consequence of this supposed two-list system is that the veterans' actual wait times could have been significantly longer than what is reported by Phoenix VA officials.

On April 23, 2014, we sent a letter to Chairman Bernie Sanders and Ranking Member Richard Burr of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee requesting a hearing be held to draw attention to the serious problems at PVAHCS. On April 24, 2014, Chairman Sanders indicated in his reply to our letter that he would wait to move forward with a hearing until the VA Office of Inspector General had concluded its investigation. In addition, on April 28, 2014, President Obama announced that he has directed Secretary Eric Shinseki to look into the matter. With that in mind, we request:

1. A briefing from your office regarding the status of your investigation and the steps that have been taken to date; and
2. Regular updates on the progress of this investigation as your office moves forward in the days and weeks ahead.

We are certain we all agree it is important to conduct an honest and objective inquiry into these allegations. Given their stark and disturbing nature and the need to ensure the prevention of

Mr. Richard Griffin

April 28, 2014

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any future consequences, it is our hope that this investigation and the subsequent oversight by the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee will occur in a timely fashion. We ask that this request be handled in strict accordance with agency rules, regulations, and guidelines. If you or your staff have any questions, please contact Ben Sundholm of Senator Flake's office at (202) 224-4521 or Elizabeth Lopez of Senator McCain's office at (202) 224-2235.



Sincerely,

JEFF FLAKE  
United States Senator



JOHN MCCAIN  
United States Senator

Cc: The Honorable Bernie Sanders, Chairman, Senate Veteran Affairs Committee  
The Honorable Richard Burr, Ranking Member, Senate Veteran Affairs Committee  
The Honorable Eric Shinseki, Secretary, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs