

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 19, 2016

The Honorable Robert McDonald
Secretary
Department of Veterans' Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington DC 20420

Dear Secretary McDonald,

We write to you today to express our ongoing concern with the state of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the affect it has on our constituents.

On April 26, 2016, the United States Office of Special Counsel (OSC) released a report that identified troubling conclusions regarding the VA Office of Inspector General's (OIG) investigation into alleged scheduling manipulation. In this report, the OSC determined that the VA did not address the whistleblowers' specific concerns and the OIG reports from these Texas VA facilities were found to be "deficient" and "unreasonable". If there was an established process for addressing whistleblower allegations, it appears it was not followed during these investigations.

The recent GAO report titled, *VA HEALTH CARE Actions Needed to Improve Newly Enrolled Veterans' Access to Primary Care*, indicates that the VA still faces tremendous challenges in providing access to care. At an April 19, 2016, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs hearing, Ms. Deborah Draper of the GAO testified that there is a "lack of comprehensive scheduling policy" at the VA. This is troubling, as scheduling problems have plagued the VA for years and it appears there has not been sufficient improvement. We encourage you to allocate the necessary resources and implement a comprehensive scheduling policy that meets the needs of today's veterans.

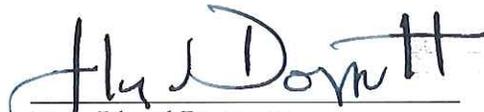
Since the Phoenix scandal in 2014, "accountability" is a term that is often used but seldom understood. At the aforementioned hearing, Chairman Jeff Miller highlighted that only four people have been fired because of VA waitlist manipulation. A complex bureaucracy appears to be at the root of the problem. The system that is inhibiting real accountability and perplexing the public must be restructured under your leadership. The OSC's findings only further drive home this point.

Providing timely health care is a non-partisan issue and the VA is simply not meeting our veterans' needs. Now more than ever, the VA and its employees must make changes to assure that the men and women who served our nation are provided timely access to health care. On behalf of the veterans we represent, we ask that these revelations convince VA leadership to make meaningful progress in developing a comprehensive scheduling policy so that all veterans can receive the care they deserve. In addition, we ask that you provide our offices an updated report on the situation, and actions taken, at the three Texas VA facilities documented by the OSC report.

Sincerely,



Rep. Lamar Smith
Member of Congress



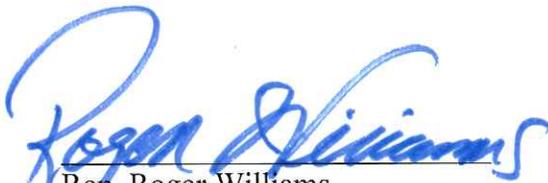
Rep. Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress



Rep. Bill Flores
Member of Congress



Rep. Henry Cuellar
Member of Congress



Rep. Roger Williams
Member of Congress



Rep. Joaquin Castro
Member of Congress