

**LAMAR SMITH**

21ST DISTRICT, TEXAS

lamarsmith.house.gov

COMMITTEE ON  
SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY  
CHAIRMAN

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY



2409 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515  
(202) 225-4236  
FAX: (202) 225-8628

**Congress of the United States**

**House of Representatives**

June 4, 2014

Richard J. Griffin  
Acting Inspector General  
Department of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Mr. Griffin,

Thank you for your response to my May 13, 2014, letter expressing concern over troubling reports that employees at numerous Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) facilities in Texas manipulated patient scheduling data.

In your response dated May 27, 2014, you stated that the VA Office of Inspector General (OIG) has initiated simultaneous reviews at the three Texas VA facilities mentioned in my letter (the North Central Federal Clinic in San Antonio, the Austin Veterans Affairs Outpatient Clinic and the Waco Veterans Affairs Medical Center). Recently, new reports have surfaced that indicate scheduling manipulation is also occurring at the Audie L. Murphy Memorial VA Hospital, which is in my congressional district in San Antonio. Four employees who schedule medical appointments for veterans at Audie Murphy Hospital claim that care for sick or injured veterans is often delayed for months and that senior managers at the hospital direct the schedulers to hide these delays.

The four VA employees claim that the OIG has been conducting interviews with staff members at Audie Murphy Hospital. However, there is some concern that these interviews have not been thorough or independent. Specifically, they claim that OIG staff only interviews employees recommended by senior VA managers at the South Texas Veterans Health Care System (STVHCS). And that the managers sit in on these interviews and instruct employees to not be forthcoming with OIG staff. If this is true, how can you claim that your investigation is an independent and comprehensive review?

These new reports raise serious questions about the legitimacy of the OIG investigation not only at the STVHCS, but also nationwide. To that end, I ask that you please provide detailed and direct answers to the following questions by Friday, June 13, 2014:

PLEASE REPLY TO:

AUSTIN DISTRICT OFFICE  
2211 SOUTH IH-35, SUITE 106  
AUSTIN, TX 78741  
(512) 912-7508  
FAX: (512) 912-7519

KERRVILLE DISTRICT OFFICE  
301 JUNCTION HIGHWAY  
SUITE 346C  
KERRVILLE, TX 78028  
(830) 896-0154  
FAX: (830) 896-0168

SAN ANTONIO DISTRICT OFFICE  
1100 N.E. LOOP 410, SUITE 640  
SAN ANTONIO, TX 78209  
(210) 821-5024  
FAX: (210) 821-5947

1. Is the OIG currently investigating the Audie L. Murphy Memorial VA Hospital and if so, do you plan to interview all employees involved in the scheduling process and not just employees recommended by senior hospital staff? Do you plan to interview all scheduling employees at the other VA facilities under investigation?
2. Are interviews being conducted by OIG staff in person at the facilities in question or by phone? How many OIG investigators are currently on-the-ground in San Antonio conducting interviews?
3. Is it true that senior hospital staff has been present during interviews with scheduling employees at Audie Murphy Hospital conducted by the OIG? If so, why is this being allowed to take place?
4. Is the OIG looking into allegations that senior hospital staff is instructing employees at VA facilities to not be forthcoming with OIG staff?
5. Is the OIG looking into allegations that VA employees are being instructed to quickly "clear the wait lists" before the investigation concludes in order to conceal the fact that the waitlists even existed?
6. Is your office looking at "recall" and "recall delinquency" lists compiled by schedulers at Audie Murphy Hospital and the other VA facilities currently under investigation?
7. Is the OIG collecting emails of all VA schedulers and management to check for any collusion or cover-up in the wake of the national investigation?

I look forward to your prompt and detailed responses to these questions.

Sincerely,



Lamar Smith  
Member of Congress