



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

June 4, 2014

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, Northwest
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write to express deep concern regarding the systemic problems within the Department of Veterans Affairs and its affiliated Veterans Health Administration facilities. You recently announced that Secretary Shinseki resigned and that you intend to replace him. We do not believe this addresses the fundamental problem – which is the abject failure of the department to meet the needs of our veterans.

Much more needs to be done. “Our first job,” you said last week, “is let’s take care of some basic management issues.” We agree, which is why, last month, the House voted overwhelmingly to pass *H.R. 4031, the Department of Veterans Affairs Management Accountability Act*. This legislation provides the Secretary of Veterans Affairs with the authority to remove or demote senior officials who are underperforming. This is much-needed given your own audit’s findings that “some front-line, middle, and senior managers felt compelled to manipulate” records to meet performance goals. Unfortunately, as you may know, Senate Democrats blocked the measure, after it received 390 votes in the House. We ask that you publicly call on Senate Democrats to reconsider their obstruction, and immediately pass H.R. 4031 so we can begin to address these “basic management issues.”

Next, we request that you direct the VA to cooperate with the House and Senate as both chambers conduct the necessary oversight. As you may also know, the department has repeatedly failed to provide the House Veterans’ Affairs Committee with timely information. This is unacceptable and unnecessary. You yourself have said that addressing this problem should not be politicized, which is why we hope this will not continue to be an issue.

Third, your administration has proposed to “triage” 1,700 veterans who are waiting for care in Phoenix, Arizona. In light of the systemic nature of this problem, however, how will you address veterans who are waiting for care across the country? All veterans on waiting lists should be able to easily access care outside the VA without waiting for a potentially corrupt facility to approve their request. Our veterans should not be left in limbo, relying on what your

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own audit acknowledges is a “systemic lack of integrity within some Veterans Health Administration facilities.” In the House, Veterans’ Affairs Committee Chairman Jeff Miller is introducing legislation that would give any veteran unable to obtain an appointment within 30 days the option to receive non-VA care. We ask that you support this proposal, or offer an immediate, effective alternative.

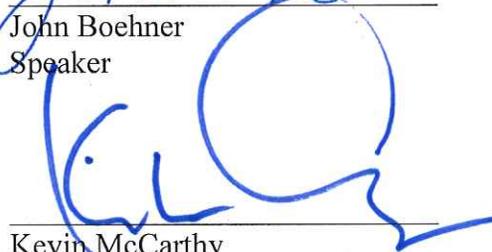
While all of these are strong first steps, none are a substitute for long-term solutions. It is imperative that you lay out for the American people your vision for reforming what is clearly a broken system. Are you willing to do whatever it takes, pending the results of the investigations that are underway, to ensure our veterans get the care we owe them, even if it means shaking up the current bureaucracy and rethinking the entire system? Do you agree the VA is a system that may need to be fundamentally transformed in order to meet its mandate of service and care to our nation's veterans? The VA scandal is a national disgrace, and Americans are eager to know the extent of your willingness to personally take action in order to make things right for those who have served.

We look forward to your response to our short-term requests as well as your long-term plan to ensure that we keep our promises to our veterans and their families.

Sincerely,



John Boehner
Speaker



Kevin McCarthy
Majority Whip



Eric Cantor
Majority Leader



Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Republican Conference Chairman