

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 21, 2016

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

Dear Secretary McDonald,

Six months ago, the Veterans Affairs (VA) Office of Inspector General (OIG) reported that in 40 VA medical facilities in 19 states the manipulation of veterans' appointment records was commonly used. In fact, the IG stated that supervisors instructed employees to manipulate patient wait time data in several states, including but not limited to: Arkansas, California, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Texas, Vermont, and Wyoming. Additionally, the Government Accountability Office Report 16-328 of April 18, 2016 states the VA has not done enough to prevent schedulers from manipulating appointment wait times and current wait time data underestimates how long veterans are actually waiting for health care.

When the bipartisan *Veterans' Access to Care through Choice, Accountability and Transparency Act of 2014 (Public Law 113-146)* was passed by Congress and signed into law by the President, we gave you the authority to hold employees accountable and remove senior executives who fail to meet the standards of conduct that veterans deserve. However, we are led to believe that the managers responsible for manipulating veterans' wait times are still working at the VA.

The *Washington Post* (the *Post*) last week reported that President Obama stated, when pressed about the ongoing issues at the VA, a "whole bunch" of people have been fired for the wait time scandals at VA medical facilities nationwide. However, the *Post* confirms "only one to six" people responsible for patient wait time problems have been fired within the last two years. It is no wonder why thousands of our veterans are still waiting to get timely care.

Instead of holding senior executives and mid-level supervisors accountable for encouraging patient wait time manipulations, the VA has repeatedly given these employees the opportunity to quit, retire, or find new jobs without consequences. The *USA Today* reported this week that your claim of new leadership at VA facilities is merely the result of moving existing managers between jobs and medical centers resulting in only eight of the 92 of the so called "new managers" coming from outside the VA.

When you were appointed more than two years ago, you vowed that with your experience from the private sector you would turn the VA around and hold employees who were involved and encouraged the falsification of wait time records accountable. While changing a culture riddled with corruption and poor morale is not easy, until failing VA employees are held accountable for their actions, nothing will change.

On behalf of our veterans, their families and American taxpayers, we desire answers to the following questions by November 14, 2016:

1. How many senior executives and mid-level supervisors have been fired or disciplined for their involvement in manipulated wait times for veterans at VA facilities nationwide? Please provide us with a list of who has been fired and disciplined. Please also state whether your actions were the use of authority under the Choice Act or other authority.
2. How many senior executives and mid-level managers were allowed the opportunity to quit, retire or find new jobs without consequences for their participation and knowledge of manipulated patient wait times? Please provide us with a list of these employees' positions.
3. The GAO report states the VA needs a new comprehensive scheduling plan to ensure that checks and balances are in place so no one can manipulate the current scheduling system. What measures have you put in place to stop manipulation of veterans' appointment records? What is the timeframe for a new scheduling system?
4. What legislative changes do you need from Congress to successfully change the culture of corruption, hire new leadership from outside the agency, and keep all VA employees accountable for their actions?

Your leadership and experience from the private sector was encouraging. In the end, we all want to ensure that our nation's veterans receive the best care and benefits in a timely fashion. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



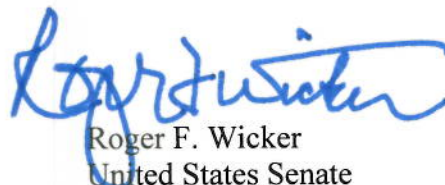
Mark Kirk
United States Senate



Thom Tillis
United States Senate



David Vitter
United States Senate



Roger F. Wicker
United States Senate



Pat Toomey
United States Senate



Shelley Moore Capito
United States Senate



Chuck Grassley
United States Senate



John McCain
United States Senate



Pat Roberts
United States Senate



Orrin Hatch
United States Senate



Ted Cruz
United States Senate



Marco Rubio
United States Senate



Jeff Flake
United States Senate



Tim Scott
United States Senate