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**Heller Pushes for Additional Information from the Las Vegas VA Hospital Following Reports of Cancelled Radiology Exams**

*Report of 250,000 Cancelled Procedures at VA Hospitals Sparks Audit of Eight VA Hospitals, Including the Las Vegas VA Medical Center*

**WASHINGTON** – Following a [report](https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2018/10/01/va-hospitals-cancellations-diagnostic-exam-orders-draw-scrutiny/1424298002/) that found the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) cancelled more than 250,000 diagnostic procedures at VA hospitals throughout the country, U.S. Senator Dean Heller (R-NV) is pushing for additional information about the cancellation of procedures at the Las Vegas VA Medical Center, which is one of the eight VA hospitals included in the VA Inspector General’s preemptive audit investigation.

According to a [USA Today report](https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2018/10/01/va-hospitals-cancellations-diagnostic-exam-orders-draw-scrutiny/1424298002/), the mass cancellation of exams, such as ultrasounds, CT scans, and MRIs, dates back to 2016 and raises questions about whether medically necessary procedures were improperly cancelled. In response to the report, the VA Inspector General is now auditing cancelled procedures at eight VA hospitals, including the VA hospital located in Las Vegas, Nevada, “to determine whether VA processed radiology requests in a timely manner and appropriately managed canceled requests.”

*“I am disappointed to learn that the Inspector General felt it necessary to include the Las Vegas VA Medical Center in its audit investigation. Veterans in need of diagnostic procedures should never have to face delays or other bureaucracy as a result of the VA attempting to clear its backlog. While I recognize that some of the cancellations may have been made because the orders were outdated and duplicative, I want to ensure that the Las Vegas VA Medical Center – one of the premier health care facilities within the VA system – is properly following procedures for closing out diagnostic orders,”* **wrote Heller, who is a senior member of the U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans’ Affairs.** *“For many veterans, these radiology exams can mean catching cancer early before it spreads.  At a time when we have veterans suffering from toxic exposure that can cause cancer, the VA cannot afford to make any mistakes or cause delays,”* **he continued.**

In a letter to Las Vegas VA Medical Center Director Peggy Kearns, Heller requested the number of the hospital’s cancelled radiology requests for veterans since 2016 and the reasons why the procedures were cancelled. Heller also asked questions about the hospital’s protocols for scheduling a radiology appointment and verifying a provider’s order to cancel a procedure. Additionally, Heller asked if the hospital will commit to immediately reviewing all of the cancelled exams within the facility if there are any instances of radiology requests being improperly cancelled.

**The full text of the letter can be found** [**HERE**](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/98a98781-7a78-4e0c-b988-caa42bcee1dd/10012018%20Letter%20to%20Las%20Vegas%20VA%20re%20radiology%20cancellations.pdf) **and below:**

*Dear Director Kearns,*

*As a senior member of the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee and a Senator representing Nevada’s veterans, I write to you today regarding reports of mass cancellations of critical diagnostic procedures – like CT scans, MRIs, and ultrasounds – since 2016 within radiology departments of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).*

*As you know, the VA Inspector General is auditing mass cancellations of radiology requests following reports that some requests were improperly cancelled.  I am disappointed to learn that the Inspector General felt it necessary to include the Las Vegas VA Medical Center in its audit investigation.  Veterans in need of diagnostic procedures should never have to face delays or other bureaucracy as a result of the VA attempting to clear its backlog. While I recognize that some of the cancellations may have been made because the orders were outdated and duplicative, I want to ensure that the Las Vegas VA Medical Center – one of the premier health care facilities within the VA system – is properly following procedures for closing out diagnostic orders.*

*For many veterans, these radiology exams can mean catching cancer early before it spreads.  At a time when we have veterans suffering from toxic exposure that can cause cancer, the VA cannot afford to make any mistakes or cause delays. Given the seriousness of this issue, I respectfully request you provide the following information and responses:*

1. *How many radiology requests for veterans have been cancelled since 2016 at the Las Vegas VA Medical Center? Of those, how many were cancelled because they were outdated and how many were cancelled because they were duplicative? For anything outside those two categories, what was the reason for the cancellation?*
2. *How did the Las Vegas VA Medical Center ensure that the guidance from the VA on canceling orders was carried out properly? If available, please provide any documentation of how the new guidance was disseminated or explained to VA staff within your facility.*
3. *What is your process for assisting veterans if they come in for diagnostics but their order shows up as cancelled?*
4. *Since 2016, has your facility ensured that there is written verification from a provider before cancelling an order?*
5. *What is your process for contacting a veteran to schedule a radiology appointment and ensuring that veteran follows through on these needed diagnostics?*
6. *If there are any instances of radiology requests being improperly cancelled, will you commit to doing an immediate and timely review of all cancelled exams within your facility and determine whether the veteran needs to be contacted for follow up?*

*Again, I appreciate your attention to this issue of accountability for Nevada’s heroes and request a response by October 9, 2018.  I look forward to continuing our partnership together and ensuring the Las Vegas VA Medical Center meets the health care needs of our veterans.*

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