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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 22, 2014

The Honorable Bernie Sanders
Chairman
Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs
418 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Sanders,

At the beginning of the 113th Congress, the minority staff provided your office with a number of possible oversight hearing topics on ongoing issues at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). To date, none of the hearings we requested have occurred. In fact, during this Congress, the Committee has held only seven oversight hearings, which did not even begin to address the issues facing the Department.

Mr. Chairman, the problems that have been identified through Government Accountability Office, VA Office of Inspector General, Office of Special Counsel, and now countless media reports warrant significant, comprehensive oversight action from this Committee.

As we heard from the President yesterday, Congress "has an important oversight role ... not just to address the current controversies, but to make sure we're doing right by our veterans across the board." As we have previously stated, the Committee has held a limited number of hearings on the issues faced by the Department. With the recent revelations and investigations occurring at nearly 30 facilities, it is even more critical that this Committee conducts the necessary oversight to begin to take urgently needed action on reforms at VA.

We are writing today to request that the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs hold oversight hearings on the following topics:

- Overall effectiveness of the Veterans Health Administration structure;
- VA's construction program;
- Mechanisms used to determine quality of VA healthcare;
- Effectiveness of VISN headquarter operations and structure;
- Overall effectiveness of the Veterans Benefits Administration structure;
- Claims backlog initiatives including the effectiveness of the Quick Start Program and two-year old claims initiative;
- Treatment of whistleblowers;
- Integrity of VA's data and metrics;
- Uses of bonuses and performance awards;
- Moving VA into the 21st Century, including the future of VistA and VA's scheduling package;
- Future priorities of the VA;
- VA's rating schedule; and,
- Employment programs at VA.

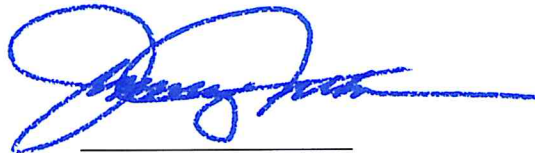
It is clear to us that the Department needs vigorous oversight to correctly identify the problems and foster top-down reforms. It is further clear to us that this Committee cannot inform its legislative efforts without gaining as full an understanding as possible of the current shortcomings at VA.

Our nation's veterans do not deserve to wait to receive their benefits and/or needed health care services from the Department of Veterans Affairs. This Committee must conduct aggressive oversight to ensure they receive the care they need when they need it.

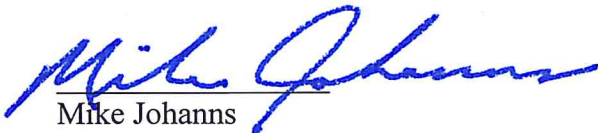
Sincerely,



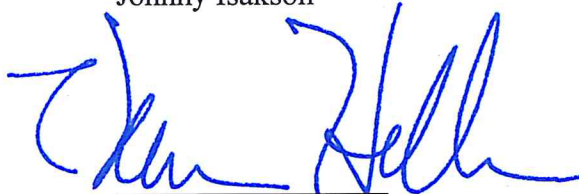
Richard Burr



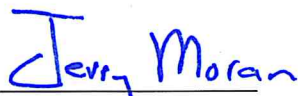
Johnny Isakson



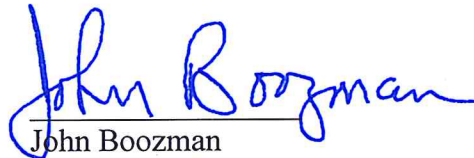
Mike Johanns



Dean Heller



Jerry Moran



John Boozman