

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

July 10, 2015

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

Dear Mr. President:

As Chairmen of the Senate and House Appropriations subcommittees that fund the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), we are extremely troubled by the lack of permanent leadership at the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) of the VA. Richard Griffin's sudden retirement, after calls for him to be removed, leaves the VA with another Acting Inspector General. The pattern of inability to hold the VA accountable to veterans is unacceptable and necessitates nomination of a capable, permanent VA Inspector General.

According to the Project on Government Oversight (POGO), the VA OIG "is in desperate need of new leadership". More troubling is this blunt warning from POGO: "Instead of being a champion of whistleblowers, [the Acting IG] was part of the VA's toxic culture of intimidation and retaliation." The VA IG must ensure that it remains an independent entity dedicated to protecting whistleblowers and carrying out its statutory responsibilities as laid out in the *Inspector General Act of 1978* (P.L. 95-452).

The VA OIG's at times inadequate investigations, long delays in completing reports, and lack of transparency have brought warranted concern and must not be allowed to become a recurring pattern. In November 2014, for example, the Office of Special Counsel (OSC) found that an initial OIG investigation into allegations of secret waiting lists and mistreatment of veterans at the VA Medical Center at Hines, Illinois was deficient and ordered a second investigation to be completed within 60 days. More than 150 days later, the VA OIG has yet to produce the second report ordered by OSC. At the VA Medical Center in Tomah, Wisconsin, a March 2014 VA OIG investigation failed to include outside pharmacists' warnings that the Tomah VA was dispensing excessive amounts of opiates to veterans. Despite these warnings, the VA OIG continued to rely upon local and regional VA officials to fix the problems and closed the case without issuing a report to the public or to Congress. The appointment of a permanent Inspector General within OIG would be a significant first step toward ensuring that investigations are properly executed, preventing unacceptable delays on reports in the future, and providing appropriate whistleblower protections.

An aggressive and truly independent permanent leader at the Office of Inspector General can regain Americans' trust that our veterans are receiving the care and benefits they were promised. We urge you to immediately nominate a permanent IG to provide this new leadership.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Mark Kirk  
Chairman,  
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Military Construction, Veterans Affairs  
and Related Agencies



Charles W. Dent  
Chairman,  
House Appropriations Subcommittee on  
on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs  
and Related Agencies