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United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0504
http://feinstein.senate.gov

June 2, 2014

Mr. Sloan D. Gibson
Acting Secretary
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20420

Dear Acting Secretary Gibson,

I write today to request that you immediately review all medical appointment wait times for Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) Health System facilities in California. I am deeply disturbed by the Office of the Inspector General's recent findings that there are systemic practices in your Department to cover up delayed healthcare delivery to veterans. It is critical that your Department take steps to ensure that California's veterans do not suffer negative healthcare outcomes due to untimely delays in receiving medical appointments. I also believe that your Department should treat this matter as a public health crisis facing our nation's veterans.

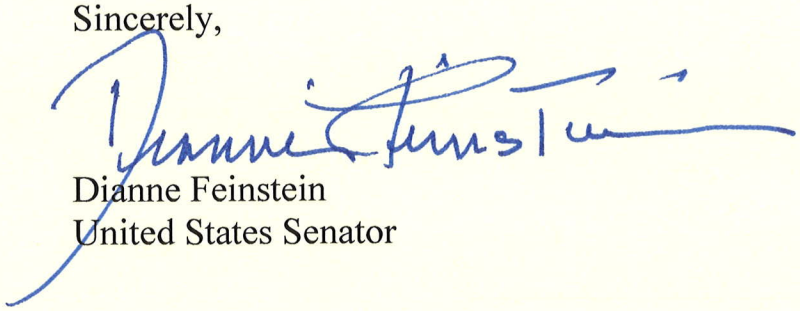
The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) released an interim report on May 28 of an investigation into the Phoenix VA Health System, where the OIG identified systematic deceptive practices of hiding unacceptable wait times for veterans to receive medical appointments. Based on these findings, Acting Inspector General Richard Griffin recommended that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs review wait lists and appointment scheduling at all VA Health Systems to ensure veterans are receiving timely healthcare. OIG specifically identified that the Phoenix VA System hid the wait times for 1,700 veterans, including 226 veterans who were waiting more than three months to receive an initial primary care appointment. Clearly, these veterans were put at risk for suffering negative healthcare outcomes due to the delayed delivery of essential healthcare.

I am aware that there are reports of veterans waiting up to 90 days to receive a primary care appointment through the Los Angeles and Long Beach VA Health Systems. California has the largest population of veterans in the United States, with many of these veterans living in Southern California. As such, I believe it is

important to complete a thorough and immediate evaluation of the Department's healthcare delivery in California.

Please plan to respond to me within 10 business days given the importance of ensuring that California's veterans have access to essential healthcare. I look forward to working with you closely to ensure the health and wellbeing of our nation's veterans in your new role as Acting Secretary. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me, or have your staff contact Tristan Colonius in my office at 202-224-2004.

Sincerely,



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

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