

DANIEL WEBSTER  
10<sup>TH</sup> DISTRICT, FLORIDA

COMMITTEE ON RULES

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION  
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May 30, 2014

The Honorable Sloan Gibson  
Secretary (Acting)  
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Gibson:

The recently released Inspector General (IG) report details preliminary results of an investigation of the well-publicized mismanagement and misconduct of Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) personnel at the Phoenix Health Care System (HCS). However, the report also indicates ongoing investigations at more than 40 other VA medical facilities and concludes that "inappropriate scheduling practices are systemic throughout [Veteran Health Administration]."

These "systemic" problems do not uphold our promise to take care of our veterans. The tens of thousands of veterans that I represent in Central Florida have waited years longer than promised for a new Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC) to be constructed. Now, their confidence in our promises to them that we will take care of them after their service to our country has been shaken further by the mismanagement of veterans health care.

In light of Central Florida's delays in the construction of the VAMC and the current mismanagement of providing timely care, I encourage you to maximize the ability of veterans who are experiencing delays in accessing medical care through VHA to access care through private-sector medical providers. The ability to authorize this care already exists within the VHA. By expanding access to private-sector medical providers to those veterans who desire such care, Central Florida veterans would have the benefit of avoiding delays in care whether they are associated with any mismanagement of wait times that may surface or the whether they are associated with the ongoing delays in constructing our local VAMC.

I do understand that local VHA managers are incentivized to disallow veterans access to this private-sector medical care due to the fact that local VHA managers must fund these services out of their own budgets. However, according to former Secretary of the VA Anthony Principi, the VA's budget has increased by approximately 300% since 2001 while the overall veteran population has decreased by approximately 3.6 million. The House of Representatives recently passed an appropriations bill that provides \$10.3 billion more this year than last year for the VA. Such funding increases suggest that there is plenty of funding to ensure local VHA managers

have the resources they need to continue administering care to our veterans while also allowing veterans to access private-sector medical care.

I ask that you direct regional and local VHA managers to maximize the ability of veterans who are experiencing delays in receiving needed care to access private-sector medical care if the veterans so choose.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Daniel Webster". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Daniel Webster