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COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH CONGRESS

335 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515

<http://veterans.house.gov>

July 10, 2015

The Honorable Jeff Miller
Chairman
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
House of Representatives

Dear Chairman Miller,

We write today out of concern for our veterans who are served by the Los Angeles VA Regional Office (LA VARO). Reports suggest that the LA VARO is among the worst performing Regional Offices in the country, and suffers from ineffective management, misapplied policy, and poor performance on quality metrics.

In addition, we have substantiated that inappropriate documents were found in a shredding bin by the VA Office of Inspector General (VAOIG) as they investigated an allegation. Based on the VA OIG substantiating this allegation, we find it reasonable to assume that documents may have been inappropriately destroyed. Such actions place our veterans and their families at serious risk of losing benefits and being denied healthcare and other important VA services.

On behalf of the other Members of Congress whose districts the LA VARO serves, we request a hearing to discuss the continued problems that plague this office and solutions to prevent them from recurring.

Sadly, as you know, the destruction of veterans' claim documentation has been an issue for the Department for several years. In 2008, the VAOIG substantiated that, across the nation, documents were being inappropriately placed in shred bins in a systemic manner. In November 2008, Veterans Benefit Administration officials "put new controls in place to help ensure applications for benefits and other official documentation [were] not improperly destroyed." You can imagine our surprise and concern that we again face this problem nearly seven years later, and that California veterans may remain at risk of being inappropriately denied the benefits they earned.

With a VAOIG report pending, we ask that you use your authority to bring together Under Secretary Hickey, the Office of VA Inspector General, and the Los Angeles VA Regional Office Director and his subordinates, to discuss these allegations and VA's actions to resolve the continued poor performance of the LA VARO.

Sincerely,



Julia Brownley
Member of Congress



Raul Ruiz, M.D.
Member of Congress