

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 2, 2018

The Honorable Michael J. Missal
Inspector General
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Inspector General Missal,

We write to request the Inspector General's office investigate attempts by outside, non-governmental individuals to influence the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)'s transition to a commercial off-the-shelf electronic health records (EHR) system. On April 30, 2018, Politico reported numerous instances of unofficial advisors to the President attempting to undermine the VA's acquisition of a new EHR. The report also alleges that this interference has "effectively delayed the agreement for months."¹

The modernization of the VA's health Information Technology (IT) infrastructure is one of the most critical initiatives for the future of VA healthcare. Limitations in the capacity of the VA's existing IT systems, especially the lack of system interoperability, is one of the key reasons that the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) has placed VA healthcare on its High-Risk List. The VA has repeatedly failed to upgrade its electronic health record and its roughly 30-year-old outpatient scheduling system. For more than a decade, the VA and the Department of Defense have lacked an effective, efficient manner of exchanging patient health information through an EHR system. Former Secretary Shulkin's commitment to modernizing VA's IT infrastructure was supported by Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle in order to better deliver care to veterans.

Simply put, updating the VA's EHR is too important to the health and wellbeing of the 9 million veterans enrolled in VA healthcare for the process to be stymied by interference from outside political forces. The process must be completely transparent and accountable, while ensuring the highest standards of patient care and responsible use of taxpayer resources. We are concerned that unofficial, non-governmental advisors who are not required to disclose potential conflicts of interest may be exerting unaccountable influence over this process.

As such, we request an investigation into whether non-governmental individuals have improperly attempted to impact the work of the VA's Office of Information and Technology in this matter. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

¹ Arthur Allen, "Trump's Mar-a-Lago pal stymies VA project," *Politico*, April 30, 2018, <https://www.politico.com/story/2018/04/30/trump-doctor-health-technology-508297> (accessed April 30, 2018)

Sincerely,



Julia Brownley
Member of Congress



Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress



Mark Takano
Member of Congress



J. Luis Correa
Member of Congress