

August 9, 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:

On May 2, 2018, we led a letter requesting your office investigate attempts by outside, non-governmental individuals to influence the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) transition to a commercial, off-the-shelf electronic health record system. Unfortunately, a *ProPublica* article published August 7, 2018,<sup>1</sup> suggests that the attempts by unofficial advisors to influence the activities of the VA extends far beyond undermining the largest Information Technology modernization program undertaken by the VA in decades.

*ProPublica* reported that over the last year and a half, a group of three individuals, all members of the President's private resort of Mar-A-Lago, daily talked with VA officials and reviewed "all manner of policy and personnel decisions."<sup>2</sup> Mr. Ike Perlmutter, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Marvel Entertainment, LLC, Dr. Bruce Moskowitz, an Internal Medicine specialist, and Mr. Marc Sherman, an attorney without healthcare industry experience, have reportedly instructed VA to begin new programs and have apparently and egregiously demanded fealty by VA employees by travelling to Mar-a-Lago to "kiss [their] ring"<sup>3</sup> using taxpayer funded travel. Not only are these individuals making policy decisions without nomination by the President or Senate confirmation, they have reportedly made personnel decisions that adversely affected the careers of numerous VA employees who felt their counsel was contrary to the delivery of quality care to our nation's veterans.

The instances uncovered by *ProPublica's* investigative team require immediate attention. Together with previous concerns regarding undue influence over the multibillion-dollar EHR modernization effort, we respectfully request that the Inspector General investigate any and all VA officials that removed, demoted, or otherwise levied adverse action against any VA employee or official due to the counsel, advise, influence, or instruction of Mr. Perlmutter, Dr. Moskowitz, Mr. Sherman, and any other individuals unofficially advising the President, the Secretary, or other officials on VA matters.

Additionally, we request that the Inspector General seek an accurate accounting of alleged personnel actions by reviewing the emails, memoranda, meeting minutes, issue briefs, and any other material of VA officials like then-Acting Secretary Peter O'Rourke and other recent political appointees that may have related to the alleged personnel actions. Ensuring VA officials

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<sup>1</sup> Isaac Arnsdorf, "The Shadow Rulers of the VA," *ProPublica*, August 7, 2018, <https://www.propublica.org/article/ike-perlmutter-bruce-moskowitz-marc-sherman-shadow-rulers-of-the-va> (accessed August 9, 2018).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

are not improperly using authorities and offices, such as the Office of Accountability and Whistleblower Protection, or violating equal employment opportunity rights is crucial for a well-functioning VA.

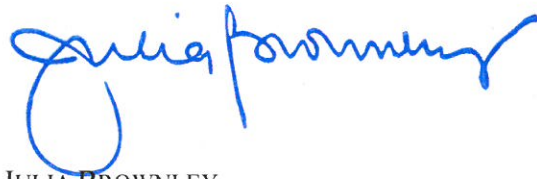
Veterans deserve and demand a transparent and accountable VA, yet these actions do nothing to satisfy those needs. Rather, this episode sows further distrust in the institutions designed to serve the needs of those who "borne the battle." Veterans, Congress, taxpayers, and all Americans deserve answers.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



ANN MCLANE KUSTER  
Ranking Member  
House Committee on Veterans' Affairs  
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations



JULIA BROWNLEY  
Ranking Member  
House Committee on Veterans' Affairs  
Subcommittee on Health