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# United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 23, 2015

The Honorable Robert McDonald  
Secretary of Veterans Affairs  
801 Vermont Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary McDonald:

I am very concerned regarding the tremendous number of Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) and VA Medical Center (VAMC) Director positions within the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) that are without permanent leadership onboard. I am alarmed that VHA does not appear to be acting with any sense of urgency in appointing permanent leadership into these positions.

Currently, about half of the VISN Directors (9) and approximately one-quarter of VAMC Directors (35) are without a permanent Director onboard leading their organizations. Some of these positions have been filled by "Acting or Interim" officials for more than one year. It is exceptionally troublesome that the VISN 18 Network Director and the Phoenix VAMC Director positions, the epicenter of last year's access scandal, have been without permanently appointed directors for more than one year. Additionally, the Tampa VAMC, one of the busiest VAMC in the country, has also been without a permanent Director onboard for approximately a year.

This problem is not exclusive to the VISN and VAMC levels of VHA. The position within VA Central Office (VACO) that directly supervises the VISN Network Directors and VAMC Directors, the Deputy Undersecretary for Health for Operations and Management (DUSHOM), has been with permanent leadership for approximately two years. The lethargy and inaction by VA to fill these key positions is inexcusable and materially contributes the ongoing VA budget difficulties and clinical care failures.

I would like VA to provide me within 30 days a comprehensive plan for filling these key leadership positions. This plan should include any barriers VA faces in recruiting VISN Network and VAMC Directors and a timeframe for when the nine VISN Network Directors and 35 VAMC Director positions currently without permanently assigned leadership aboard will be filled. In addition, I would like VA to provide me the details of their succession plan for key leadership positions within VA, to include VISN Network Directors and VAMC Directors.

Our nation's veterans have earned and deserve the best health care we can deliver. Part of providing that high quality care is ensuring there are officials appointed to key leadership positions that are capable and able to oversee and manage the organization. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Johnny Isakson  
Chairman