

DANIEL K. AKAKA, HAWAII,
CHAIRMAN
JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER IV, WEST VIRGINIA
PATTY MURRAY, WASHINGTON
BERNARD SANDERS, VERMONT
SHERROD BROWN, OHIO
JIM WEBB, VIRGINIA
JON TESTER, MONTANA
MARK BEGICH, ALASKA
ROLAND W. BURRIS, ILLINOIS
ARLEN SPECTER, PENNSYLVANIA
WILLIAM E. BREW, STAFF DIRECTOR

RICHARD M. BURR, NORTH CAROLINA,
RANKING MEMBER
JOHNNY ISAKSON, GEORGIA
ROGER F. WICKER, MISSISSIPPI
MIKE JOHANNIS, NEBRASKA
LINDSEY O. GRAHAM, SOUTH CAROLINA
LUPE WISSEL,
REPUBLICAN STAFF DIRECTOR

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 16, 2009

The Honorable Eric Shinseki
Secretary of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20420

Dear Secretary Shinseki:

I have reviewed the Office of Inspector General's July 15, 2009, report on the contract between the Department of Veterans Affairs and the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas (UTSWMC) for Gulf War Illness research. I am very troubled by the IG's findings that this contract was not in compliance with Public Law 109-114; that VA and UTSWMC did no collaborative research as anticipated by the Conference Report on the appropriations measure; and that VA has been unable to require UTSWMC to comply with the terms of the contract, including providing VA with access to the data.

Gulf War Illness is a serious disorder affecting many veterans. Only through focused, serious research will we be able to truly understand this illness. Indeed, that was a goal of the designated funding in Public Law 109-114.

I ask that you look into this matter immediately and implement the Inspector General's recommendation to terminate the contract for default so that VA's funds can be directed to research projects that will help those veterans affected by Gulf War Illness. VA's research effort, including research into Gulf War Illness, must remain an intramural program, working collaboratively with outside research programs when such collaboration is appropriate and in the best interests of VA and the Federal Government.

Sincerely,



Daniel K. Akaka
Chairman

Cc: Senator Tim Johnson