

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

June 4, 2019

The Honorable Robert Wilkie  
Secretary  
Department of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We are writing with serious concerns regarding veterans' access to timely health care.

As you know, in 2014, media reports based on whistleblowers' allegations revealed major problems with the amount of time veterans had to wait for health care appointments at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). These revelations of very lengthy wait times were eventually substantiated. Further, it was shown that some VA hospitals misrepresented the facts and consistently skewed data to hide the problem. Congress examined the situation, leading to legislation to address delays in health care. While some veterans still face major obstacles in accessing timely care, VA as a whole has appeared to be making progress.

It was, therefore, surprising to see reports of new and serious allegations in the media this morning concerning hidden wait times for veterans.

The Washington Post described how a whistleblower inside VA has reports showing two sets of differing wait time numbers.<sup>1</sup> According to the article, figures from these reports, "indicate the actual number of veterans waiting for VA healthcare could be much higher than the numbers VA makes publicly available." The differences appear quite large, with a monthly wait time average in the internal VA report roughly three times as large as that shown in VA data made public.

VA did not dispute the existence of two sets of differing reports detailing the wait time numbers. Instead, VA's spokesperson assigned the discrepancy to the use of administrative versus clinical numbers. However, this response is, at best, confusing.

We, therefore, ask VA to provide – by the end of this week – a more thorough explanation for the existence of two sets of reports on wait time for veterans' health care. In fulfilling this request, VA should provide the House and Senate Committees on Veterans' Affairs

---

<sup>1</sup> Joe Davidson, *Whistleblower Says There's A Secret VA Wait List for Care. The Department Says That's Not True*, Washington Post, June 3, 2019

The Honorable Robert Wilkie  
June 4, 2019  
Page 2

with the reports described by the article and the appropriate VA officials should make themselves available for a briefing to the Committees.

Sincerely,



Mark Takano  
Chairman  
House Committee on Veterans' Affairs



Jon Tester  
Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs