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October 26, 2026

The Honorable Doug Collins
Secretary of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Collins,

I write today to express my concern with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) not meeting statutory requirements with their oversight into and engagement with its twenty-seven advisory committees. Specifically, my concern lies with many of the advisory committees either not meeting at all in recent years or, when they have attempted to meet, frequently having their meetings cancelled or postponed. These bodies are vital to VA's understanding of how to better serve our nation's veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors by providing independent advice, expertise and feedback to VA leadership. Ensuring VA's advisory committees meet on a regular basis to provide veteran and stakeholder input throughout all facets of the Department should be a priority of this Administration and again, in many cases, is required by law.

The Family, Caregiver, and Survivor Advisory Committee was previously composed of a panel of experts with impressive backgrounds in caregiver and survivor policy, advocacy, and casework -- many caregivers and survivors themselves -- who researched and recommended vital improvements to VA programs serving these populations. This committee was disbanded in 2025, leaving the Secretary and other VA leaders without guidance from veteran families, caregivers, and survivors at a critically important time, particularly for developing future eligibility requirements for VA's Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers and coverage of Post 9/11 legacy caregivers and survivors.

The Advisory Committee on Prosthetics and Special-Disabilities Programs has not met since October 2024, despite being required by law to meet regularly. Given the changes in VA's prosthetics approval process made in June of this year, I am concerned this congressionally mandated advisory committee has not had the opportunity to provide appropriate oversight regarding these recent changes.

The Veterans' Rural Health Advisory Committee, the Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans, and the Geriatrics and Gerontology Advisory Committee have all also had recent meetings canceled, without any public plans to reschedule.

Lastly, the congressionally mandated Advisory Committee on U.S. Outlying Areas and Freely Associated States (OAFAS) is currently suspended due to expiration of its membership. Unless new members are appointed and meetings promptly resume, VA will not be in alignment with the law. 38 USC 548(e)(1) requires the Secretary to meet at least once yearly in-person with this committee. I am

concerned VA's new, lengthy vetting process of potential committee members will prevent the committee from meeting this year.

Allowing many of these advisory committees to remain essentially inactive suggests public oversight, engagement, and accountability are not priorities for your leadership. These committees provide pertinent recommendations and advice to VA, and your Administration cannot continue to ignore them, especially given ongoing changes in the Department. I ask for transparency and accountability from you in ensuring VA's advisory committees meet regularly and have the opportunity to share critical insights to help guide service delivery for veterans and their loved ones. To that end, I request prompt responses to the following questions:

1. The Advisory Committee on Education has not met since November 2023. When will this Committee meet next?

2. The Advisory Committee on Women Veterans has not met since December 2024. When will this Committee meet next?

3. The Advisory Committee on Disability Compensation has not met since September 2024. When will this Committee meet next?

4. The Advisory Committee on Prosthetics and Special-Disabilities Programs has not met since October 2024. When will this Committee meet next?

5. The Family, Caregiver, and Survivor Advisory Committee has not met since June 2024. When will this Committee meet next?

6. The Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans has not met since September 2024. When will this Committee meet next?

7. The Geriatrics and Gerontology Advisory Committee has not met since September 2024. When will this Committee meet next?

8. What actions is VA taking to ensure the next meetings of the aforementioned eight committees occur successfully and are not cancelled?

9. Have you completed the vetting process for re-appointing members to the OAFAS Advisory Committee? If not, when will this process be finished?

10. When can Congress expect to receive the OAFAS Advisory Committee's most recent report on recommendations for legislative or administrative action?

11. Why is the Veterans' Advisory Committee on Environmental Hazards listed on the Department's website as being "Administratively inactive?"

12. What is the Advisory Committee Management Office's role in tracking the committees who are not meeting regularly? How is it providing oversight and holding committees accountable to ensure meetings occur?

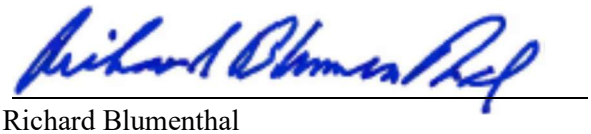
13. Who is currently leading the Advisory Committee Management Office and who do they report to? How many full-time employees are employed solely within this office?

14. How many designated federal officers are currently employed? How many are assigned to each committee?

Ret. Colonel Wanda A. Wright served as Chair of the Advisory Committee on Women Veterans and was a member of the Committee since 2017. In July, Colonel Wright resigned from her role, citing the lack of "meaningful engagement or substantive activity" on the Committee, which has not met since December 2024. Colonel Wright's resignation after nearly ten years on this important Committee points to the severity of this issue: the Department is no longer prioritizing key oversight bodies, and it is costing our veterans the expertise and dedication of qualified individuals like Colonel Wright.

VA's advisory committees are a vital component of the Department's efforts to serve veterans and their families. They bring together subject matter experts, medical professionals, veterans service organizations and other advocates to provide critical feedback on VA programs and policies directly to the Secretary. They must be adequately supported and utilized by this Administration.

Sincerely,



Richard Blumenthal
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs