



UNITED STATES SENATE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

June 2, 2014

Acting Secretary Sloan D. Gibson
United States Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Acting Secretary Gibson,

Like most Americans, I have been shocked and stunned by the burgeoning scope and scale of abuses involving secret waiting lists, falsified records and delays in treatments within the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). The egregious and expanding number of facilities affected by such improper, potentially illegal misconduct is reflected in the report submitted by the VHA to the President on Friday. It is an alarming and astonishing document. And it adds further weight to my call for the Department of Justice to take a leading role in the investigation and potential prosecution of criminal wrongdoing.

I write to urge **immediate** release of the 216 site audit reports providing the factual basis for this report to the President. The report is an overall summary of site visits, interviews and other factfinding by the audit teams, but the site audit reports for specific locations and facilities should be made public immediately. This information – the basis of the report released to the President on Friday – has been compiled and analyzed, and it must be made available to the public immediately. Non-disclosure does a disservice to all veterans. Full transparency is the best way to begin a new era of leadership at the VA.

The report states, “Of the 216 site audit reports, many were flagged for further review because of concerns identified . . . about questionable scheduling practices signaling lack of integrity. . . .” These “flagged sites will be reviewed,” followed by further data gathering or reporting of “willful misconduct” to the Office of Inspector General (OIG).

The American public, most especially our nation’s veterans, deserves and needs to see these site audit reports immediately. They have a right to know where problems have been found, who is responsible, and what will be done to hold them accountable and fix the problems. As patients and clients, they also should be informed so they can be alert to questionable practices and provide important information to the auditors regarding their experience scheduling appointments. Advocates likewise have a right to know so they can raise awareness of potential problems, contribute to a better understanding of their scope and extent, and help to solve them.

The need for transparency is especially important here in Connecticut – where an IG report has

found problems in conditions and practices at the West Haven facility. These issues, although unrelated to secret wait lists and fraudulent scheduling, have undermined trust and confidence. Without any further information on the auditors' findings regarding scheduling, that trust and confidence may be further endangered.

Nationally, disclosure of critical information – as much as possible, as soon as possible – is vital to restoring trust and confidence in the integrity and capability of the VA's health care system. Concealment, even if only temporary, fuels doubt and mistrust. While the VA may already intend to release these site audit reports at some future time, I urge you to do so now, without delay.

As a member of the U.S. Senate's Veterans Affairs Committee, I offer my help as you begin this profoundly significant new assignment. We share the goal of giving veterans the best health care in America – first-class, world-class medicine for every one of our nation's heroes, now.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Richard Blumenthal". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senate