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August 16, 2012

The Honorable Eric K. Shinseki  
Secretary  
Department of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Ave., NW  
Washington DC 20005

Dear Secretary Shinseki,

In light of the ongoing VA Inspector General investigation into last year's Human Resources (HR) conferences in Orlando, it is imperative that the Committee be provided additional information for the record to aid in our oversight of this and/or other VA conference activity. To that end, we write to ask that you clarify the conflicting VA testimony received by the Committee during the 112th Congress regarding VA conference expenditures.

In response to pre-hearing questions from Chairman Miller in connection with the Committee's Feb. 17, 2011, hearing, VA responded that \$20,018,644 was budgeted in fiscal year (FY) 2011 for national conferences and \$22,020,508 for such conferences in FY 2012. However, in testimony before the Committee on Nov. 15, 2011, Mr. W. Todd Grams, VA's Chief Financial Officer, stated that conference expenditures in FY 2011 were "a little over \$100 million." Mr. Grams further testified that conference expenditures were up from \$92 M in FY 2009. To add to the confusion, VA later provided post-hearing question responses to Chairman Miller in connection with the Nov. 15, 2011, hearing that an "accurate, reliable figure on the number of conferences [held in the past several years] is not available."

Mr. Secretary, it is essential that we be given factual information about VA's conference spending. If VA spent roughly \$20 million on conferences in 2011 (as was relayed to the Committee in February 2011), it raises questions about the propriety of the HR conferences in Orlando consuming anywhere from 25 to 45 percent of VA's entire conference budget for the year. If Mr. Grams' \$100 million figure from November 2011 is accurate, it raises questions of excessive conference spending in a tight fiscal climate. Finally, if VA has no reliable data at all to relay to the Committee, it raises questions about whether adequate financial controls and oversight of VA conferences had ever existed, whether they exist now, and who should be held accountable.

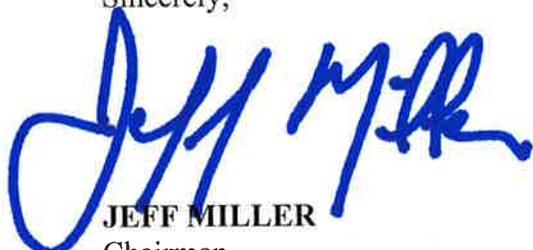
To immediately resolve these discrepancies, please provide the Committee with the answers to the following requests for information:

1. The total conference expenditures for each of fiscal years 2009, 2010, and 2011.
2. A detailed list of the individual conferences held and the costs associated with each during fiscal years 2009, 2010, and 2011.
3. A description of what was budgeted for conferences in fiscal year 2012 and what has actually been spent to date, to include a breakdown of the individual conferences held and the costs associated with each.
4. A budget estimate for conferences to be held in fiscal 2013 and a complete list of the individual conferences expected to be held.

Committee staff has sent VA additional questions regarding existing VA policy on conferences, as well as VA's adherence to a conference directive issued by VA Chief of Staff, John Gingrich, in August 2011. We would ask that you give the answers to those questions and the requests for information above your immediate attention so that responses may be received no later than September 4, 2012.

Thank you for your attention to our request and for your continued service to America's veterans.

Sincerely,



**JEFF MILLER**  
Chairman



**BOB FILNER**  
Ranking Member

JM/jt