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June 13, 2013

The Honorable Eric Shinseki
Secretary
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Shinseki,

At a June 4 House Committee on Veterans' Affairs hearing, it came to light that multiple actors had compromised the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) computer network system and had done so since March 2010. Upon acknowledging a system breach, VA could not say for certain what information was put at risk due to its failure to adhere to the Federal Information Management Security Act of 2002 (FISMA).

It is known for certain that some of the areas in the system that were compromised included unencrypted personally identifiable information (PII) regarding veterans and their dependents. This disturbing revelation prompts us to ask the following questions:

- Will VA offer credit protection services for every veteran and dependent in its database? Private businesses routinely provide such services when the PII of their customers is potentially compromised.

- Under FISMA, VA must notify Congress of any system security compromises, yet VA failed to do this. Why was Congress not notified of these compromises?

- In a May 14, 2013, response to an inquiry from Subcommittee Chairman Mike Coffman, you stated "To be clear, VA's security posture was never at risk." But, testimony during the June 4 hearing, including that of VA's Acting Chief Information Officer Stephen Warren, contradicts this statement. Did the Office of Information & Technology inform you of risks to VA's network, including breaches by multiple actors, prior to June 4, 2013? If so, why did your May 14, 2013, letter to Subcommittee Chairman Coffman indicate that VA's security posture was never at risk?

The breach in security of our veterans' most sensitive data is an issue that we do not take lightly. We look forward to receiving your candid responses to the above questions and your cooperation as our investigation continues.

Thank you again for your dedication to our nation's veterans. If you have any questions, please contact Ms. Helen Tolar, Staff Director of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, at (202) 225-3527.

Sincerely,

JEFF MILLER
Chairman

MICHAEL H. MICHAUD
Ranking Member

JM/rm