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ONE HUNDRED EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS

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September 19, 2024

The Honorable Denis R. McDonough
 Secretary
 U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
 810 Vermont Avenue, NW
 Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary McDonough:

It has been nearly two months since I first sought information related to the sexual harassment and inappropriate relationship allegations coming out of the Mountain Home Veterans Affairs Medical Center (Mountain Home VA), to include allegations facility leadership failed to properly address the situation, and VA has yet to fully answer all my questions. VA's lack of transparency and failure to cooperate with the Committee's investigation is eerily like VA's conduct during the Committee's investigation into sexual harassment and inappropriate relationships within VA's Office of Resolution Management, Diversity & Inclusion (ORMDI).

The Committee's investigation into ORMDI uncovered rampant sexual harassment and inappropriate conduct that, as you know, led to the retirement, resignation, or removal of several senior VA leaders. VA's lack of transparency with the Mountain Home VA allegations leads me to believe this situation is just as egregious as what the Committee uncovered with ORMDI. For an agency which asserts its committed to fulfilling the White Ribbon Pledge by never committing, excusing, or staying silent about sexual harassment and sexual assault, VA's silence regarding my committee's inquiries is hypocritical and highly concerning.

Since Under Secretary for Health, Dr. Shereef Elnahal, notified me of one set of allegations on July 16th, the Committee has received little information despite multiple requests for more details. On July 25th, based on information Dr. Elnahal shared, the Committee sent a letter to VA seeking more information on the allegations of sexual harassment and an inappropriate relationship between a supervisor and subordinate employee.¹ I then directed my committee staff to request a briefing on the allegations, which staff sent on July 31st. VA failed to schedule this requested briefing. Shortly thereafter, Mountain Home VA employees got in contact with the Committee and not only provided further details on the allegations, but also

¹ Letter from Chairman Mike Bost to the Hon. Denis McDonough, Secretary, U.S. DEP'T. of Veterans AFF. (July 25, 2024).

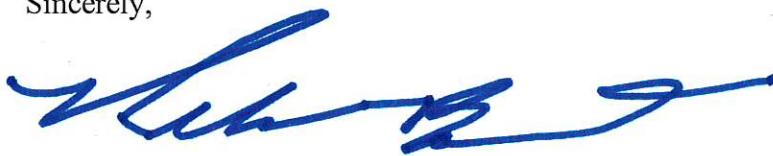
informed the Committee of separate sexual harassment, sexual assault, and inappropriate relationship allegations. Due to this additional information, Committee staff again requested a briefing on August 6th, which again VA failed to schedule.

On August 9th, the Committee sent another letter to VA requesting information related to the original and newly discovered allegations.² Following this letter, on August 12th, VA confirmed what the Committee already knew: there were separate sexual harassment, sexual assault, and inappropriate relationship allegations against several Mountain Home VA employees. Notably though, VA failed to answer any of the questions from the first or second letters.

On August 23rd, VA finally sent a response to the Committee's initial July 25th letter.³ Disappointingly, VA failed to provide a full response. For example, VA stated it expected to provide a response to one of the July 25th letter's questions when it responded to the Committee's August 9th letter, but gave no indication when this response would occur. Most recently, on September 11th, Committee staff for the third time requested a briefing on the Mountain Home VA allegations. To date, VA has failed to schedule the briefing. Simply put, this is unacceptable, and I know veterans and VA's dedicated workforce expect better from VA.

Considering VA's prior mishandling of the ORMDI sexual harassment and inappropriate relationship allegations, it is imperative the Committee receive all the Mountain Home VA related information it requested. These allegations are serious and disturbing, and they should be treated as such, not pushed around and filed away for a later date. As such, it is imperative VA immediately schedule the briefing and provide full responses to the Committee's July 25th and August 9th letters. The requested information is vital to ensure Congress has proper oversight of VA's handling of this sensitive situation so we can work together to make sure those found responsible for misconduct are held accountable and that all Mountain Home VA employees have confidence they can work to serve veterans without being subjected to sexual harassment. Please note, the Committee will resort to compulsory process, if necessary, to obtain the requested information.

Sincerely,



MIKE BOST
Chairman

Cc: The Honorable Mark Takano, Ranking Member

² Letter from Chairman Mike Bost and Ranking Member Takano to the Hon. Denis McDonough, Sec'y, U.S. DEP'T. of Veterans AFF. (Aug. 9, 2024).

³ Letter from the Hon. Denis McDonough, Sec'y, U.S. DEP'T. of Veterans AFF. to Chairman Mike Bost (Aug. 23, 2024).