

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

KEITH B. ASHDOWN, STAFF DIRECTOR
GABRIELLE A. BATKIN, MINORITY STAFF DIRECTOR

March 17, 2015

The Honorable Richard J. Griffin
Deputy Inspector General
Office of the Inspector General
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Deputy Inspector General Griffin:

I write to request that you produce to the Committee the 140 unreleased health care inspections your office has completed since 2006. On March 8, 2015, *USA Today* reported that the VA OIG has “declined to release the findings of 140 health care investigations since 2006, potentially allowing dangerous problems to fester without proper oversight.”¹ In light of the tragedies that occurred at the Tomah VA Medical Center (Tomah VAMC), it is imperative that the Committee obtain these reports in order to fully understand the range and scope of potential problems at the VA.

The Inspector General Act requires inspectors general to keep Congress “fully and currently informed about problems and deficiencies relating to the administration of [executive branch] programs and operations.”² Analysis has shown that the VA OIG has increasingly decided to withhold healthcare inspections from Congress in recent years. In 2007, the VA OIG declined to release 13 healthcare inspections.³ The number of unreleased reports increased to 19 in 2010 and to 23 reports last year.⁴ One of those previously unreleased reports was the March 2014 administratively closed healthcare inspection of the Tomah VAMC.

In order to fulfill their statutory obligations, inspectors general must be transparent in reporting their work to Congress and the American people. On February 27, 2015, Chairman Johnson and Chairman Grassley asked that you disclose to Congress “any investigation, evaluation, audit, or report that is closed and was not disclosed to the public.”⁵ This request for the disclosure of the 140 unreleased health care inspections is a subset of that request. Accordingly, I respectfully request that the VA OIG produce all 140 previously unreleased

¹ Donovan Slack, *VA inspector declines to release findings of 140 probes*, GREEN BAY PRESS GAZETTE, Mar. 8, 2015, <http://www.greenbaypressgazette.com/story/news/investigations/2015/03/08/va-inspector-declines-to-release-findings-of-140-probes/24535003>.

² 5 app. U.S.C. § 2.

³ Slack, *supra* note 1

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ Letter from Ron Johnson, S. Comm. on Homeland Sec. & Gov’t Affairs, & Charles E. Grassley, S. Comm. on the Judiciary (Feb. 27, 2015).

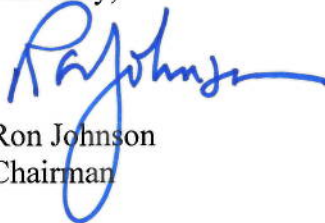
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healthcare inspections conducted since 2006 as soon as possible but no later than March 24, 2015.

The Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs is authorized by Rule XXV of the Standing Rules of the Senate to investigate “the efficiency and economy of operations of all branches of the Government.”⁶ Additionally, S. Res. 253 (114th Congress) and S. Res. 73 (114th Congress) authorize the Committee to examine “the efficiency and economy of all branches of the Government including the possible existence of fraud, misfeasance, malfeasance, collusion, mismanagement, incompetence, corruption, or unethical practices”⁷ For purposes of responding to this request, please refer to the definitions and instructions in the enclosure.

If you have any questions about this request, please contact Kyle Brosnan of Chairman Johnson’s staff at (202) 224-4751. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Ron Johnson
Chairman

cc: The Honorable Thomas R. Carper
Ranking Minority Member

Enclosure

⁶ S. Rule XXV(k); *see also* S. Res. 445, 108th Cong. (2004).

⁷ S. Res. 73 § 12, 114th Cong. (2015).