

CO-SPONSOR LEGISLATION TO HOLD TOP VA OFFICIALS ACCOUNTABLE AND DEPLOY RAPID RESPONSE TEAMS TO AMERICA'S WORST PERFORMING VA MEDICAL CENTERS

Dear Colleague,

I write to encourage you to cosponsor legislation that will require top officials at the Department of Veteran Affairs to finally intervene directly at the Department's worst performing medical centers and to provide the Department with powerful new tools to turnaround failing medical centers.

We've all seen the headlines: manipulated waiting lists, excessive wait times, failed leadership, dysfunctional culture, and even criminal behavior at VA facilities around the country. Like many of you, I have worked closely with the VA at the local, regional, and national level to urge administrators to make reforms at the medical center in my district. I am disappointed by the slow progress and insufficient results.

From this experience, it is clear to me that top VA officials are unable to provide the day-to-day leadership necessary to turnaround chronically mismanaged facilities. There is a lot of talk and good intent, but insufficient action.

The VA's bureaucracy is infamous. In effect, layers of bureaucracy separate the politically appointed officials that report to the President and the midlevel managers whose performance directly impacts the wellbeing of our nation's veterans.

"The Failing VA Medical Center Act" represents the anti-bureaucracy.

Similar to a state department of education assuming control of a failing school system, this legislation would require top VA officials to create a rapid response team of high performing managers and medical professionals from around the country that would be deployed to replace administrators at failing centers. These teams would then be empowered to take independent, swift, and robust action necessary to turnaround failing centers.

This legislation requires the VA to:

- Recruit and establish a team of the best managers, administrators, and medical professionals using special incentives provided by the legislation;
- Assign the team directly to a presidentially-appointed Under Secretary who has a direct line of access to the Secretary of the VA;
- Require the team to takeover a small number (2 to 7) of the worst VA centers in the nation based on quantitative measures already published by the VA, removing the failing medical centers from the control of failed local and regional VA leadership;
- Give the team enhanced legal authorities (hiring, firing, contracting) so it has the tools necessary to make an immediate impact, and
- Impose statutory reporting requirements so that Congress, the President, and the public have a clear report card on the status of medical centers across the country and the team's progress based on quantitative measures.

Please consider joining this effort to hold top VA official's accountable and empower a team of high performing managers to go to work fixing our nation's worst performing VA medical centers.

Yours truly,

Martha Roby
Member of Congress