

ORRIN G. HATCH
UTAH

MICHAEL J. KENNEDY
CHIEF OF STAFF

104 Hart Senate Office Building

TELEPHONE: (202) 224-5251
TDD (202) 224-2849
FAX: (202) 224-6331

Website: <http://www.senate.gov/~hatch>

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4402

COMMITTEES:

FINANCE
RANKING REPUBLICAN MEMBER

JUDICIARY

HEALTH, EDUCATION,
LABOR, AND PENSIONS

AGING

JOINT COMMITTEE
ON TAXATION

May 16, 2014

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

Dear Mr. Secretary:

With close to 50,000 unique patients dependent each year on the VA Salt Lake City Health Care System (VASLCHCS), which consists of the George E. Wahlen Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center and ten Community Clinics throughout Utah, Idaho, and Nevada, I express serious concerns over recent media reports indicating alleged mismanagement and inappropriate practices within the Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care System.

As I understand, a VA Inspector General (IG) investigation has been initiated into allegations regarding possible neglect or mismanagement, which may have led to patient deaths at VA facilities in Phoenix, Arizona. Additionally, you have called for an internal audit of access to care of all VA facilities, to ensure full compliance with existing VA policies and processes. I support these actions and request for your continued oversight into resolving neglect or mismanagement within the VA.

In the pursuit of full transparency and proper accounting, I would like an update regarding the VA's current practices and procedures. I want to ensure that veterans in the State of Utah and throughout our country can trust the VA system with timely and appropriate care. Specifically, I request your assistance in the following matters:

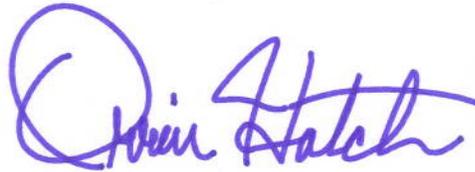
1. A reporting on the VA's existing efforts to prevent future neglect of fast and reliable care, at each of Utah's VA facilities;
2. A detailed description of the VA's electronic waitlist program, and an update of VASLCHCS proficiency of its electronic waitlist program;
3. An update and timeframe of the VA IG investigation into allegations regarding mismanagement at the Phoenix, Arizona VA Medical Center; and
4. Any additional information you deem necessary in demonstrating the VA's ability to provide quality and timely care to Utah's Veterans.

I fully understand the complexity of the VA system, in operating the largest integrated health care delivery system in America. However, despite the size and scope of the organization, I firmly believe in holding the VA accountable to, as stated in the "Secretary's Letter" accompanied with the submitted Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) 2013 Performance and Accountability Report, to:

"...continue to improve the quality of our programs and service delivery, optimize our efficiency, and exceed expectations of Veterans, their families, and Survivors. Every VA employee is charged to be an advocate for Veterans. We are all committed to providing Veterans and their families with the very best health care and services. The Nation has depended on our Veterans, and VA's employees want Veterans to know they can depend on VA."

Thank you for your attention to my request. I look forward to your assistance on these matters at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Orrin Hatch". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "O" and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Orrin G. Hatch
United States Senator