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OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS  
SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN  
SMALL BUSINESS COMMITTEE  
BALANCED BUDGET  
AMENDMENT CAUCUS  
CHAIRMAN

Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-0606

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May 19, 2014

The President  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

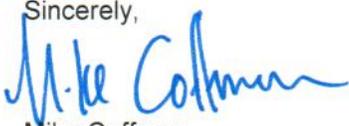
Since January of 2013, I have served as the chairman of the Oversight & Investigations (O&I) Subcommittee for the House Veterans Affairs Committee. In that capacity I've become increasingly alarmed at the extraordinary lack of leadership within the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) and the terrible price that our nation's veterans have paid because of it.

Given my observations through multiple hearings and reviewing the evidence from numerous investigations, it is my firm opinion that the problems within the VHA are so pervasive that they truly represent a crisis to those who have worn the uniform in defense of our nation and are seeking the health care benefits they have earned. The challenges of caring for our nation's warriors after they come home from serving overseas are unfortunately neither new nor unique to your Administration. Your predecessor was forced to confront an embarrassing scandal when the American people learned of the poor living conditions at Walter Reed Army Medical Center at the height of the Iraq War. However, your Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Eric Shinseki, has been at his post for five years and has yet to make a difference in changing the culture within the VA.

I strongly urge you to immediately appoint a bipartisan commission consisting of a sufficient number of respected outside experts to fully investigate the problems at the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) and to recommend solutions so that we can meet our obligations to our nation's veterans. You yourself recommended a similar commission after the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill in 2010. In addition to systematically evaluating where and how the system has failed our veterans, an independent commission operating outside of the normal constraints of the partisan political process gives us the best chance to drive prompt, thorough, and meaningful reforms that can set this wayward bureaucracy on the right path. Accountability is only the beginning of what our VA system needs. Our job won't be complete until wholesale reform is achieved.

A non-partisan commission made-up of elder statesmen and women gives us our best, and maybe only, chance to accomplish this high duty with all deliberate speed. I believe individuals such as former Secretaries of State Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice, former Senators Joe Lieberman, Dick Lugar and Sam Nunn, former VA Under Secretary for Health Kenneth Kizer, former Secretary of the Treasury Larry Summers, former U.S. Representative Lee Hamilton and former New Jersey Governor Tom Kean can be trusted by the American people to recommend the proper course of action to change the culture of the VHA, making it effective in meeting the health care needs of our nation's veterans.

I deeply appreciate your concern for our nation's veterans and look forward to your prompt reply.

Sincerely,  
  
Mike Coffman  
Member of Congress