United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 16, 2015

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write to reiterate the serious need for you to nominate an Inspector General (IG) for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) as soon as possible. This position is necessary to establish proper oversight and accountability at VA, as well as to start rebuilding the lack of confidence too many Americans have in the Department. This is especially important given the recently released VA Office of Inspector General (OIG) report showing systemic mismanagement, including the 307,000 veterans who died while waiting to be enrolled for health care from the Department.

The report documents disturbing failures at VA: a backlog of 889,000 health care applications in pending status; 307,000 veterans dying while their health care applications were pending; 10,000 veteran health records purged or deleted; and 40,000 unprocessed applications lost then rediscovered.

Unfortunately, these appalling errors not only display a disappointing history at the Department, but an unacceptable status quo. Of the veterans with pending records, more than 48,000 died within the past four years. However, the VA Office of Inspector General could not accurately define how many veterans may have died waiting for health care benefits because VA "lacked adequate procedures and management oversight." The departmental shortcomings highlighted by these findings are shocking and inexcusable.

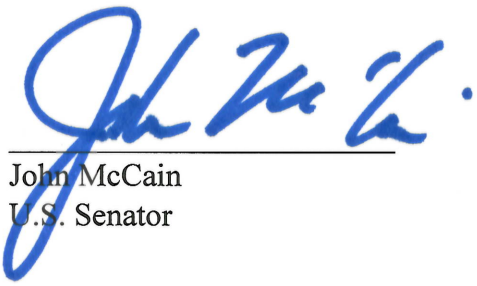
We wrote to you on March 24, 2015, regarding the importance of filling numerous vacancies in presidentially-appointed IGs. We also wrote to you on June 25, 2015, specifically to urge you to nominate a permanent IG for the VA Office of Inspector General. While acting IGs may perform commendable work, their temporary status fails to achieve the independence and authority of permanent IG leadership.

As you know, there has been no permanent IG at VA for more than 600 days. This lack of leadership and oversight has contributed to VA's consistently failing to deliver on our promises to veterans. A permanent watchdog is needed to conduct thorough oversight and correct this troubling pattern of behavior. As such, we urge you to ensure that oversight of VA is prioritized by nominating a permanent IG as soon as possible.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

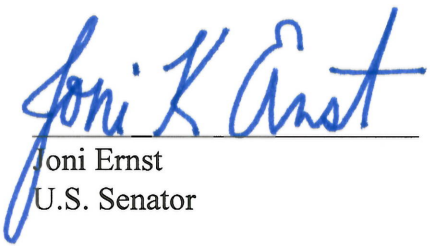
Sincerely,

Kelly Ayotte
U.S. Senator



John McCain
U.S. Senator

Claire McCaskill
U.S. Senator



Joni Ernst
U.S. Senator