

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1803

March 16, 2012

The Honorable Eric K. Shinseki
Secretary
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20420

Dear Secretary Shinseki:

After spending last Friday afternoon on a conference call with Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Assistant Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Operations and Management Philip Matkovsky, I learned that both the Lafayette and Lake Charles Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) facilities were cancelled due to clerical errors by your department. This is unacceptable.

Considering these errors were caused by your department, I demand detailed correspondence in ten calendar days answering the following questions:

- 1) Who is accountable for the clerical errors and what will you do to assure me and the veterans of Southwest Louisiana that this process will run smoothly from here on out with no more hiccups?
- 2) What specifics will you promise the Veterans Action Coalition of Southwest Louisiana to ensure an expedited process going forward?
- 3) Will you assure me that you are dedicated to opening both the Lafayette and Lake Charles CBOCs within the next 2.5 to 3 years? If yes, how?
- 4) Will you do a better job keeping my staff and I apprised of this situation going forward?

As you have previously recognized, providing clinics in South Louisiana that meet the health needs for our American heroes is of utmost importance. In your letter to me dated September 9, 2011, you said: "The timely activation of the Lafayette CBOC expansion is a priority of the Veterans Integrated Service Network." To now estimate these clinics will be activated in 2.5 to 3 years does not warrant priority status and is completely offensive.

Since taking office, I have sent letters and attempted to set up phone calls with you on this matter. For many months, my staff repeatedly contacted your office to schedule phone calls with you. However, your office failed to give us the common courtesy of a mere call back. I only was able to secure last Friday's phone call after my staff complained of your department's past ignoring of our repeated requests.

To say that the VA has been evasive on keeping my staff adequately informed is a complete understatement. I was told that the bidding process prevented the VA from commenting on details and specifics but I was assured that the process was being handled by the VA at the highest levels. My office was also assured that the results would be satisfactory to the veterans of Acadiana. Instead of a quality application process that ran smoothly, the Veterans Action Coalition of Southwest Louisiana and I have been given a drawn-out ordeal that is far from satisfactory.

I expect from you an expedited timeline going forward for the Lafayette and Lake Charles CBOCs. I also ask that you consider the available South Park and Lourdes hospital facilities as potential grounds for the Lafayette CBOC facility.

In closing, I ask you to take action on the concerns that I have laid out before you. Our local veteran community deserves more from you and your department. We need to get these facilities up and running so we can service our veterans in need. For those who have given much, we should honor them with the care they deserve.

If you need any clarification on any of these concerns, please contact Michael Stwarka of my staff at 202.225.4031.

Respectfully,



JEFF LANDRY
Member of Congress