

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 18, 2015

The Honorable Charlie Dent
Chairman
Subcommittee on Military Construction,
Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies
HVC-227, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Sanford Bishop
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Military Construction,
Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Dent and Ranking Member Bishop:

Thank you for your bipartisan leadership on work related to veterans and their families. As you prepare to consider the FY2016 Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act, we respectfully urge you to consider the following requests on behalf of Arizona veterans.

As you know, the VA crisis began at the Phoenix VA Health Care System (PVAHCS). Whistleblowers at the PVAHCS brought to light the systemic failures in the accessibility of care. The revelations that veterans at the PVAHCS, and veterans at other VA facilities across the country, were placed on secret lists and had to wait months before seeing a doctor are immoral and un-American.

Since then, we have learned that these problems are systemic and that serious work remains to provide our veterans with timely and appropriate access to care. We respectfully ask that the FY2016 Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act provide robust funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs to sustain and accelerate the progress we have made.

Leveraging community providers to augment and increase access to services for Arizona veterans has been critical to improve the quality of care available to Arizona veterans. We ask that you continue to fully fund the Choice Act.

We also ask that the funding bill ensures that the PVAHCS has the resources it needs to hire additional healthcare specialists, behavioral health professionals, and support staff. Findings by the VA Office of Inspector General (VAOIG) and information shared by VA employees indicates that additional staffing is necessary to meet the clinical needs of Arizona veterans, provide timely veteran-oriented customer relations and scheduling services, and health records management. PVAHCS also needs to expand and modernize its physical plant to properly meet the needs of Arizona veterans. Your ongoing support is needed to ensure PVAHCS becomes the veterans-centric healthcare system Arizona veterans deserve.

Lastly, we request that the appropriations bill strengthen oversight and transparency at the PVAHCS to ensure taxpayer dollars are used appropriately and Arizona veterans receive the care they have earned. Last year, the House accepted an amendment we offered to increase funding for the VAOIG. We request that the FY16 bill again include robust funding for the VAOIG to continue its oversight work to improve operations at the PVAHCS.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests and for your work on behalf of our nation's veterans.

Sincerely,



Kyrsten Sinema
Member of Congress



Matt Salmon
Member of Congress