

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 23, 2014

The Honorable Bernie Sanders
Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs
412 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-6050

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs
412 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-6050

Dear Chairman Sanders and Ranking Member Burr:

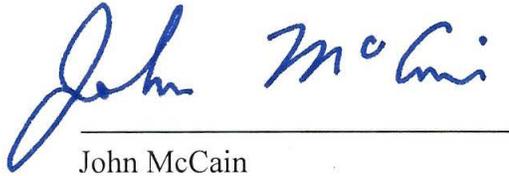
As you know, on April 10, 2014, the *Arizona Republic* reported that the deaths of forty veterans may be related to delays in care at the Phoenix VA Health Care Center (PVAHCS). Due to the severity of these allegations, we request that the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs investigate and hold a hearing to examine the matter.

This article was published after Chairman Miller of the House Veterans Affairs Committee testified during a hearing that he had evidence suggesting that PVAHCS officials manipulated schedules in order to make it appear that patients received appointments faster than they actually did. This raises concern that officials have been misusing the Electronic Waiting List system employed by all VA Health Centers and keeping a non-official list outside of standard VA procedures. In fact, it has been suggested that PVAHCS staff may have used this non-official electronic list to queue veterans until an appointment became available within their 24-25 day waiting period, at which point veterans were transferred to the official waiting list despite the fact that the appointment request was made much earlier. One major consequence of the supposed two-list system is that veterans' actual wait times could have been significantly longer than what is reported by Phoenix VA officials.

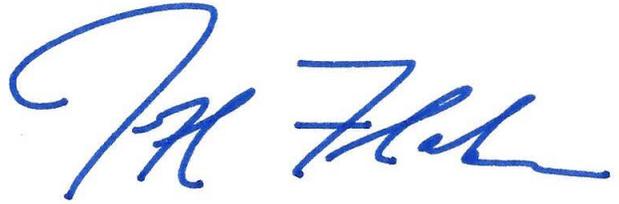
Regardless of whether these deaths were caused by mismanagement by PVAHCS officials or intentional manipulation, the allegations appear indicative of broader trends that we have observed regarding the VA's apparent failure to provide quality health care to our veterans. As you undoubtedly appreciate, VA must use its resources to address veterans' concerns in an effective, efficient, and timely manner. American veterans deserve to have an agency that respects their sacrifice to this country by putting their needs first.

We request that a hearing draw attention to serious problems at PVAHCS and to explore what steps can be taken by the VA to stop similar situations in the future around the country. Thank you for the consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of John McCain in blue ink, written in a cursive style.

John McCain
United States Senator

Handwritten signature of Jeff Flake in blue ink, written in a cursive style.

Jeff Flake
United States Senator