

VETERANS ACTION COALITION OF SOUTHWEST LOUISIANA

February 9, 2015

Congressman Charles W. Boustany, Jr, MD
1431 Longworth House Office Bldg
Washington, DC 20515-1807

Dear Congressman Boustany,

As Louisiana veterans, we urge our entire Congressional Delegation to request House and Senate oversight hearings to ensure timely and appropriate payments for veterans' emergency medical care.

The VA has admitted to harming the credit ratings of hundreds of Louisiana veterans by refusing to pay for this life-saving care. VA leaders refuse to properly process veterans' medical records in a secure and timely manner. They've also admitted to depriving veterans of their due process rights during appeals by leaving veterans' requests untouched in locked cabinets.

Louisiana healthcare providers continue reporting tens of millions of dollars in delayed payments for veterans' emergency medical care. Some smaller community providers report more than half a million dollars in unpaid claims. Many are more than a year old, and some veterans have even been billed for unpaid claims in instances where the VA should have been responsible for payment. Seniors with unpaid Medicare bills benefit from better timely payment standards than military veterans have today under the VA.

Oversight hearings could address other VA mistakes that potentially jeopardize the lives of Louisiana veterans. After authorizing emergency medical care at a non-VA hospital, the VA sometimes denies payment by claiming a lack of medical necessity. By its own policy, the VA should cover these services when "a prudent layperson would reasonably expect that delay in seeking immediate medical attention would be hazardous to life or health." Inappropriate denials could pressure veterans to gamble with their own lives by ignoring the severity of their symptoms to drive miles away to the nearest VA hospital – often times two hours away.

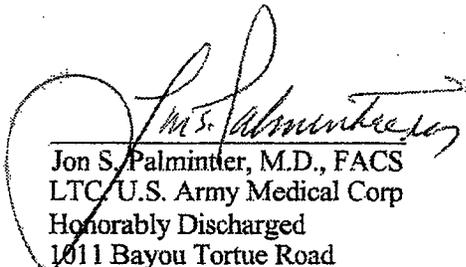
Congress instructed the highest VA officials in Washington to address the above problems when it passed the Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act. The Louisiana delegation is still waiting for replies from Washington on how best to proceed with remedying this deplorable problem. We need our VA leaders to push strongly for oversight hearings on this matter and be personally involved in the veterans' plight in Louisiana. We veterans and our leaders should not allow VA employees to play games with our veterans' life-saving medical care.

We also appreciate the House Veterans' Affairs Committee recent pledge to hold hearings on "the accuracy and timeliness of VA's payments to non-VA providers, in particular." We respectfully

ask you to help expedite House and Senate hearings, and to testify or submit comments for the record during these hearings.

Veterans put their lives at risk to preserve American freedom and they deserve greater professionalism and stronger leadership in the VA. We appreciate your work on behalf of Louisiana veterans and look forward to your response to this letter.

Sincerely,



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