

BRAD R. WENSTRUP
2ND DISTRICT OHIO

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS'
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February 23, 2016

The Honorable Robert McDonald
Secretary
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, N.W., Room 100
Washington, D.C. 20420

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I am deeply disturbed regarding the recent allegations of gross mismanagement and improper care at the Cincinnati VA Medical Center. Unfortunately, it seems that these problems stem from local management who have their own personal self-interest at heart. It appears that VA hospital leadership has, in one way or another, allowed potential problems to fester with little oversight from VA headquarters.

These concerns may never have come to light without the efforts of rank and file doctors and nurses at the Cincinnati VAMC who alerted others to continuing problems. These individuals obviously felt that the issues would continue to be unaddressed unless they went outside the hospital for help. Their bravery and commitment to veterans should be commended.

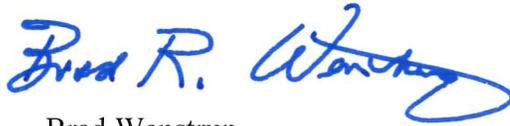
Unfortunately, as you know, just as the VA has become known for scandals, it has also become known for maintaining a culture of fear and indifference that prevents would-be whistleblowers from coming forward.

I write today to request your assurance that these whistleblowers will be safe from any threat or retaliation, that their concerns will be taken seriously, and that those responsible for this misconduct will be held accountable for their actions. Our taxpayers and veterans need to know that you have their backs.

It is my understanding that these whistleblowers brought many of the now-public concerns to your personal attention last year. In fact, while the House Veterans Affairs' Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations has been working with these same whistleblowers to investigate claims against management at the Cincinnati VAMC, it is my understanding that they asked the committee to wait in order to give you the opportunity to intervene and resolve issues that were adversely affecting veteran care. May I ask what your findings have been?

Veterans, their families, and the American people have grown weary of the VA's inability to be honest with the public and address the deep-rooted problems that result in continued scandals. If VA leaders do not take swift and decisive action to remove those responsible for this mismanagement and work to maintain higher standards, I fear that longer-term reforms will never succeed. I think you would agree that our veterans deserve better.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Brad R. Wenstrup". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Brad Wenstrup
Member of Congress