DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Washington DC 20420

June 15, 2021

In Reply Refer To: 001B
FOIA Request: 20-06080-F

Austin Evers & Mehreen Rasheed
American Oversight
[no physical address provided]
foia@americanoversight.org

Dear Austin Evers & Mehreen Rasheed,

This is the Second Initial Agency Decision (IAD) to your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request to the Office of the Secretary, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (OSVA), dated and received April 14, 2020, and assigned FOIA tracking number **20-06080-F.** You originally requested:

"All email communications (including email messages, calendar invitations, and any attachments thereto) sent by any of the VA officials listed below containing any of the following key terms:

1. Goldstein
2. "Women Veterans Task Force"
3. WVTF
4. Crenshaw
5. Baker
6. Walden
7. Unsubstantiated
8. Discredit
9. Discredited
10. Liar
11. Lies
12. Accusation
13. Allegation
14. Accusations
15. Allegations
16. Baseless
17. Serial
18. Dirt
19. "multiple complaints"
20. "numerous complaints"
21. "repeated complaints"
22. "frequent complaints"
23. Tone-deaf
24. "tone deaf"
25. Harassment
26. Assault
27. Assaulted
28. Brownley
29. Takano

VA Officials:

a. Secretary Robert Wilkie, or anyone communicating on his behalf (such as a scheduler or assistant)
b. Deputy Secretary James Byrne
c. Pamela Powers, Chief of Staff

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d. Jacquelyn Hayes-Byrd, Director of the Center for Women Veterans, or anyone communicating on her behalf (such as a scheduler or an assistant)
e. Aaron Kenneth Bailey, Senior Advisor for Investigations
f. Dr. Tamara Bonzanto, Assistant Secretary for the Office of Accountability and Whistleblower Protection, or anyone communicating on her behalf (such as a scheduler or assistant)
g. William Hudson Jr., Acting General Counsel
h. Anyone serving as White House Liaison."

On May 13, 2020, you narrowed your FOIA request to:

1. "Revise the key terms as follows for all custodians *except* for "Pamela Powers, Chief of Staff":
   - Goldstein
   - ("Women Veterans Task Force" OR WVTF OR Crenshaw OR Baker OR Walden OR Brownley OR Takano) AND (unsubstantiated OR discredit* OR liar OR lie* OR accus* OR allegation* OR baseless OR dirt OR complaint* OR tone-deaf OR "tone deaf" OR "sexual harassment" OR "sexual assault")

   Please note that the asterisk (*) indicates 'stemmed' or 'wildcard' search terms, so for example, "accus*" would return terms including: accuse, accusation, etc.
2. For the following custodians, "Secretary Robert Wilkie, or anyone communicating on his behalf (such as a scheduler or assistant)," "Deputy Secretary James Byrne," and "Pamela Powers, Chief of Staff," eliminate the following search terms for the date range **Sept. 20, 2019-Feb. 18, 2020**:
   - Goldstein
   - Crenshaw
   - Takano
3. Please exclude the initial mailing of news clips, newsletters, or other mass distribution emails that are sent without additional any commentary or message."

As a reminder, for your FOIA requests for OAWP and OGC records, the OAWP FOIA office (FOIA **20-06092-F**) and OGC FOIA office (**20-06093-F**) will separately respond to you.

Second Partial Initial Agency Decision & Reasonable Searches Dated 5/6/20 & 5/22/20

On May 6, 2020, an OSVA FOIA Officer searched through email boxes and calendar entries of former VA Secretary Robert Wilkie, former VA Deputy Secretary Jim Byrne, former VA Acting Deputy Secretary Pam Powers, former VA Acting Chief of Staff Jacquelyn Hayes-Byrd, and former VA-WH Liaison Darren Bossie. An OSVA FOIA Officer conducted the below searches.

Search 1
From: Wilkie or RLW or Byrne or Powers or Byrd or Bossie
Key terms: Goldstein or ("Women Veterans Task Force") or WVTF or Crenshaw or Baker or Walden or Unsubstantiated or Discredit or Discredited or Liar or Lies or Accusation or Allegation or Accusations or Allegations or Baseless or Serial or Dirt or ("multiple complaints") or ("numerous complaints") or ("repeated complaints") or ("frequent complaints") or Tone-deaf or ("tone deaf") or Harassment or Assault or Assaulted or Brownley or Takano
Date: 9/20/19 to 4/14/20
Results: 2711 emails

Search 2
To: Wilkie or RLW or Byrne or Powers or Byrd or Bossie
Key terms: Goldstein or ("Women Veterans Task Force") or WVTF or Crenshaw or Baker or Walden or Unsubstantiated or Discredit or Discredited or Liar or Lies or Accusation or Allegation or Accusations or Allegations or Baseless or Serial or Dirt or ("multiple complaints") or ("numerous complaints") or ("repeated complaints") or ("frequent complaints") or Tone-deaf or ("tone deaf") or Harassment or Assault or Assaulted or Brownley or Takano

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Date: 9/20/19 to 4/14/20
Results: 5721 emails

On May 12, 2020, we explained: "Thank you for working with us to narrow the scope of the FOIA request. You are correct that I included searches for emails sent by and received by the custodians. However, even the sent emails total 2711 emails and approximately 14,000 pages. Many veterans, their family members, and VA employees email complaints to the VA Secretary, who forwards them to the Senior Executive or VAMC Director with cognizance over the issue, often without comment."

On May 22, 2020, the OSVA FOIA Officer conducted the below narrowed, stemmed or wildcarded searches.

Search 1
From: Byrd or Bossie
Stemmed Key Terms: Goldstein or ("Women Veterans Task Force" OR WVTF OR Crenshaw OR Baker OR Walden OR Brownley OR Takano) AND (unsubstantiated OR discredit OR liar OR lie OR accuse OR allege OR baseless OR dirt OR complain OR tone-deaf OR "tone deaf" OR "sexual harassment" OR "sexual assault")
Date: 9/20/19 to 4/14/20

Search 2
From: Wilkie or RLW or Byrne or Powers

Stemmed Key Terms: ("Women Veterans Task Force" OR WVTF OR Baker OR Walden OR Brownley) AND (unsubstantiated OR discredit OR liar OR lie OR accuse OR allege OR baseless OR dirt OR complain OR tone-deaf OR "tone deaf" OR "sexual harassment" OR "sexual assault")
Date: 9/20/19 to 2/18/20

Search 3
From: Wilkie or RLW or Byrne or Powers
Stemmed Key Terms: Goldstein or ("Women Veterans Task Force" OR WVTF OR Crenshaw OR Baker OR Walden OR Brownley OR Takano) AND (unsubstantiated OR discredit OR liar OR lie OR accuse OR allege OR baseless OR dirt OR complain OR tone-deaf OR "tone deaf" OR "sexual harassment" OR "sexual assault")
Date: 2/19/20 to 4/14/20

The aforementioned three (3) stemmed or wildcarded searches dated May 22, 2020, yielded sixty-six (66) pages. After reviewing the sixty-six (66) pages, OSVA redacts some information with FOIA Exemptions 3, 5, and 6.

5 U.S.C. § 552(b)(3) exempts from disclosure information "specifically exempted from disclosure by statute." 5 U.S.C. App. § 3(d) (the "Inspector General Act") gives only the VA Inspector General or his or her delegees control over VA investigative or auditing activities initiated by the VA Inspector General. OSVA is statutorily prohibiting from releasing such documents received or prepared during VA OIG investigating or auditing activities. Per FOIA Exemption 3, OSVA redacts substantive portions of non-public, confidential VA OIG complaints. OSVA does **not** redact details of VA OIG complaints already released to the public.

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5 U.S.C. § 552(b)(5) exempts from required disclosure "inter-agency or intra-agency memorandums or letters which would not be available by law to a party other than an agency in litigation with the agency." Under the attorney-client and work product privileges, the VA redacts portions of records, emails, and communications between VA employees and attorneys relating to a draft memorandum to the House Veterans Affairs Committee. The release of this information would impede the ability of VA employees and attorneys to speak openly and frankly about drafts of memorandum from or concerning the VA, particularly the legal issues pertaining to such. The release of this information would also compromise the VA's legal positions for its lawsuits.

Exemption 5 protects interagency or intra-agency memorandums or letters that would not be available by law to a party other than an agency in litigation with the agency. Moreover, this exemption permits an agency to withhold material reflecting the thoughts, opinions, and recommendations of federal officials and consultants reviewing an issue. Under the deliberative process privilege and FOIA Exemption 5, OSVA redacts internal government deliberations, thoughts, opinions, recommendations, and proposed solutions from federal employees reviewing VA drafts of a memorandum to the House Veterans Affairs Committee in their professional capacities, as well substantive portions of non-public, confidential VA OIG complaints. The information contained in the responsive records is both predecisional and deliberative because it reflects preliminary opinions, proposed solutions, and recommendations, which do not reflect VA's final decision. Exposure of premature discussions before a final decision is made could create undue public confusion. The release of the redacted information would negatively impact the ability of federal employees to openly and frankly consider issues amongst themselves when deliberating, discussing, reviewing, proposing changes to, and making recommendations on VA drafts, as well as on VA investigative or auditing activities. The information reveals the thoughts, deliberations, and opinions that, if released, would have a chilling effect on the ability of federal officials and consultants to discuss, opine, recommend or be forthcoming about the agency's issues which require full and frank assessment. Here, the disclosure of the withheld information is likely to compromise the integrity of this deliberative or decision-making process. Moreover, the predecisional character of a document is not altered by the passage of time. Bruscino v. BOP, No. 94-1955, 1995 WL 444406 at *5 (D.D. C. May 15, 1995), aff'd in part, No. 95-5212, 1996 WL 393101 (D.C. Cir. June 24, 1996).

5 U.S.C. § 552(b)(6) exempts from required disclosure "personnel and medical files and similar files the disclosure of which would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy." FOIA Exemption 6 permits VA to withhold a document or information within a document if disclosure of the information, either by itself or in conjunction with other information available to either the public or the FOIA requester, would result in an unwarranted invasion of an individual's personal privacy without contributing significantly to the public's understanding of the activities of the federal government. Specifically, the information being withheld, as indicated on the attached documents, under FOIA Exemption 6, consists of names, identities, personal addresses, email addresses, phone numbers, cellular numbers, facsimile numbers, and conference codes and telephone numbers of: federal employees, Congressional employees, veterans, and private citizens. However, VA releases the names of VA Senior Executives. Federal employees, Congressional employees, veterans, and private citizens retain a significant privacy interest under certain circumstances, such as in instances where the release of their information could represent a threat to their well-being, harassment, or their ability to function within their sphere of employment. However, VA releases the names of VA Senior Executives and reporters. The federal employees, veterans, and private citizens whose information is at issue have a substantial privacy interest in their personal information. In

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weighing the private versus the public interest, we find that there is no public interest in knowing names, identities, personal addresses, email addresses, phone numbers, cellular numbers, facsimile numbers, and conference codes and telephone numbers of: federal employees, Congressional employees, veterans, and private citizens. The coverage of FOIA Exemption 6 is absolute unless the FOIA requester can demonstrate a countervailing public interest in the requested information by demonstrating that the FOIA requester is in a position to provide the requested information to members of the general public and that the information requested contributes significantly to the public's understanding of the activities of the Federal government. Additionally, the requester must demonstrate how the public's need to understand the information significantly outweighs the privacy interest of the person to whom the information pertains. Upon consideration of the records, I have not been able to identify a countervailing public interest of sufficient magnitude to outweigh the privacy interest of the individuals whose names are redacted. The protected information has been redacted and (b)(6) inserted. "Withholding a telephone number or e-mail address, alone, is not sufficient to protect that [privacy] interest; alternate means of contacting and harassing these employees would be readily discoverable on the Internet if this court ordered their names disclosed." Long v. Immigration & Customs Enf't, 2017 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 160719 (D.C. Cir. 2017).

April 27, 2020, Partial Initial Agency Decision; Reasonable Searches Dated 2/18/20, 2/19/20, 2/27/20, 2/28/20, 3/4/20, & 3/23/20

Even before your FOIA request due to public interest, on February 18, 2020 and February 28, 2020, the OSVA FOIA Officer searched through the email boxes and calendar entries of Secretary Robert Wilkie, former Deputy Secretary Jim Byrne, and Chief of Staff Pam Powers. The OSVA FOIA Officer used the following stemmed search terms with search timeframe of September 1, 2019, to February 18, 2020: 1) Goldstein, 2) Byrne and (employ or dismiss or status or perform), 3) Takano, and 4) Crenshaw. These February 18, 2020, and February 28, 2020, search yielded three hundred twelve (312) pages of emails.
On February 18, 2020, the OSVA FOIA Officer requested that the VA Office of Operations, Security, and Preparedness (OSP) submit all responsive records in its possession. The VA OSP office replied that the responsive records were not under its possession, but likely at the DC VAMC. On February 19, 2020, the OSVA FOIA Officer requested that the DC VAMC submit all responsive records in its possession.

On February 27, 2020, the OSVA FOIA Officer searched through Jim Byrne's three (3) boxes of paper files for responsive records. The OSVA looked for records relating to Ms. Goldstein, Rep. Crenshaw, or Rep. Takano. This February 27, 2020, search yielded six (6) responsive pages.

On March 4, 2020, the DC VAMC submitted nine (9) pages of responsive records. On March 23, 2020, the OSVA FOIA Officer searched through the VA Secretary's cabinets where he keeps his notes. The OSVA FOIA Officer searched for references to Ms. Goldstein and Rep. Crenshaw. This March 23, 2020, search did not yield any responsive records.

On April 27, 2020, we released the aforementioned three hundred twenty-seven (327) pages redacted with FOIA Exemptions 5, 6, and 7(A).

FOIA Mediation

As part of the 2007 FOIA amendments, the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) was created to offer mediation services to resolve disputes between FOIA requesters and Federal agencies as a non-exclusive alternative to litigation. Using OGIS services does not

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affect your right to pursue litigation. Under the provisions of the FOIA Improvement Act of 2016, the following contact information is provided to assist FOIA requesters in resolving disputes:

VA Central Office FOIA Public Liaison:
Name: Doloras Johnson
Email Address: vacofoiaservice@va.gov

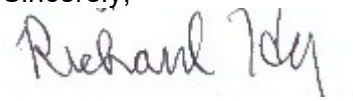
Office of Government Information Services (OGIS)
Email Address: ogis@nara.gov
Fax: 202-741-5769
Mailing address:
National Archives and Records Administration
8601 Adelphi Road
College Park, MD 20740-6001

FOIA Appeal
This concludes OSVA's response to request **20-06080-F**. Please be advised that should you desire to do so, you may appeal the determination made in this response to:

Office of General Counsel (024)
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

If you should choose to file an appeal, please include a copy of this letter with your written appeal and clearly indicate the basis for your disagreement with the determination set forth in this response. Please be advised that in accordance with VA's implementing FOIA regulations at 38 C.F.R. § 1.559, your appeal must be postmarked no later than ninety (90) days of the date of this letter.

Sincerely,



Richard Ha, JD, CIPP/G
OSVA FOIA Officer

Attachments – sixty-six (66) redacted pages

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From: Powers, Pamela
Sent: Fri, 20 Sep 2019 22:03:59 +0000
To: Cashour, Curtis
Cc: Tucker, Brooks;Syrek, Christopher D. (Chris);Connell, Lawrence B.;(b)(6)
M.;Hutton, James
Subject: FW: [EXTERNAL] Letter to SecVA
Attachments: 2019.9.19 Letter to VA Sec Wilkie from CH re investigation of sexual assault at DC VA.pdf, Harassment_xml.pdf

FYI. Please see attached. I imagine this has already been sent to the press. Larry C is doing the forensics on this.

Sent with BlackBerry Work
(www.blackberry.com)

From: Tucker, Brooks <(b)(6) @va.gov>
Date: Friday, Sep 20, 2019, 5:38 PM
To: Powers, Pamela <(b)(6) va.gov>
Subject: FW: [EXTERNAL] Letter to SecVA

Sent with BlackBerry Work
(www.blackberry.com)

From: (b)(6) @mail.house.gov>
Date: Friday, Sep 20, 2019, 5:12 PM
To: Tucker, Brooks (b)(6) va.gov>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Letter to SecVA

Brooks –

Once you get a chance to read this, please give me a call at your earliest convenience. 765-914-(b)(6)

(b)(6)

(b)(6)
Staff Director
House Veterans Affairs Committee
Chairman Mark Takano (CA-41)
THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

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STAFF DIRECTOR

U.S. House of Representatives
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
ONE HUNDRED SIXTEENTH CONGRESS
B-234 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
http://veterans.house.gov

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JON TOWERS
REPUBLICAN STAFF DIRECTOR

September 20, 2019

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

Dear Mr. Secretary:

On September 20, 2019, at approximately 11 a.m., Ms. Andrea Goldstein, a Professional Staff Member of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, was sexually assaulted in the atrium of the Washington, D.C. VA Medical Center (DC VAMC) while waiting for her medical appointment.

The atrium café workers and employees at the Information Desk witnessed the assault. Instead of taking immediate action to intervene or assist her, they interacted with the assailant after the assault and took no action. The staff at the Information Desk only referred her to the DC VAMC Patient Advocate. The Patient Advocate also failed to act or render any assistance when she reported the assault and made her wait to make her report. The first employee at the Medical Center to act and immediately call the police, was the doctor she was scheduled to see— the fourth individual notified after the incident. While the VA police officer was working on Ms. Goldstein's complaint, the police officer stated that she too had been sexually harassed by individuals at the DC VAMC while in uniform and on duty, and that she was aware of individuals being sexually harassed and assaulted in various locations on the DC VAMC campus.

This letter serves as a notice that the Committee is opening a Congressional investigation into the allegations outlined above, and other incidents of sexual harassment and assault at the DC VAMC. I will also be requesting an investigation by the VA Inspector General into the nature and frequency of instances of sexual harassment and assault, sex and gender-based harassment, and verbal and physical assault occurring at VA facilities throughout the country, and whether VA employees take appropriate actions when these incidents are reported. My staff have received reports that patients, especially women veterans, frequently experience sexual harassment and have been victims of sexual assault at VA medical facilities. These victims also report that actions taken by VA employees to appropriately address these incidents are inconsistent and often unsatisfactory.

Additionally, I request that you immediately take the following actions:

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1. Arrest, or refer to local law enforcement for arrest, the individual accused of sexually assaulting Ms. Goldstein and investigate her allegations of sexual assault;
2. Remove this individual from DC VA Medical Center property, and prohibit this individual from accessing VA property until conclusion of the criminal investigation and disposition of the case;
3. Request an investigation by the VA Office of Inspector General and other federal law enforcement authorities into incidents of sexual assault and harassment at the DC VA Medical Center;
4. Conduct and mandate bystander intervention training for all employees at the DC VA Medical Center, and mandate reporting of all incidents of sexual harassment and assault;
5. Provide video footage, access to witnesses and other parties involved, police reports, documents, and other materials requested by the Committee on Veterans' Affairs that will aid in the Committee's investigation of incidents of sexual harassment and assault at the DC VAMC.

I also request the following additional actions:

1. Establish a Department-wide anti-harassment and anti-sexual assault policy including elements outlined in the enclosed draft legislation and provide technical assistance to the Committee on the enclosed draft legislation.

No veteran, family member, caregiver, or VA employee should be the victim of sexual assault or harassment at a VA facility. Further, every VA employee should be trained to take immediate action, including intervening to prevent further assault or harassment, contacting law enforcement, and providing aid and assistance to individuals reporting sexual harassment and assault.

Should you have any questions about this request, please contact (b)(6) Committee General Counsel, at (202) 225 (b)(6) or at (b)(6) @mail.house.gov. Thank you for your prompt attention to this request.

Sincerely,

Mark Takano

Mark Takano
Chairman

Enclosures: Discussion Draft, to amend title 38 United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish and implement a comprehensive anti-harassment and anti-sexual assault policy of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

cc: The Honorable Michael J. Missal
Inspector General
Department of Veterans Affairs

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[DISCUSSION DRAFT]

116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. _____

To amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish and implement a comprehensive anti-harassment and anti-sexual assault policy of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Ms. BROWNLEY of California introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on _____

A BILL

To amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish and implement a comprehensive anti-harassment and anti-sexual assault policy of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

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SECTION 1. ANTI-HARASSMENT AND ANTI-SEXUAL ASSAULT POLICY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter II of chapter 5 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

"§ 533. Anti-harassment and anti-sexual assault policy

"(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall establish a comprehensive policy to end harassment and sexual assault, including sexual and gender-based harassment, at all facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs. This policy shall include the following:

"(1) Responses to incidents of harassment and sexual assault committed by any veteran or other public visitor within a facility of the Department.

"(2) Responses to incidents of harassment and sexual assault of any veteran or other public visitor within a facility of the Department.

"(3) A process for reporting and responding to harassment and sexual assault described in paragraph (1).

"(4) A process for reporting and responding to harassment and sexual assault described in paragraph (2).

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"(5) Mandatory annual training for employees and contractors of the Department regarding how to report and address harassment and sexual assault described in paragraphs (1) and (2).

"(6) Annual distribution of anti-harassment and anti-sexual assault educational materials by mail or email to each individual entitled to a benefit under a law administered by the Secretary.

"(7) The prominent display of anti-harassment and anti-sexual assault messages in each facility of the Department, including how to report harassment and sexual assault at such facility.

"(8) The posting of anti-harassment and anti-sexual assault banners on websites of the Department, including eBenefits.va.gov and myHealthEVet.va.gov.

"(b) POINTS OF CONTACT.—The Secretary shall designate, as a point of contact to receive reports of harassment and sexual assault—

"(1) at least one individual at each facility of the Department, with regards to that facility;

"(2) at least one individual employed in each Veterans Integrated Service Network ('VISN'), with regards to facilities in that VISN; and

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"(3) at least one individual employed at the Central Office of the Department to track reports of harassment across the Department, disaggregated by facility.

"(c) REPORTING.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the House of Representatives an annual report on harassment and sexual assault in facilities of the Department. Each such report shall include the following:

"(1) Results of harassment and sexual assault programming, including the End Harassment program.

"(2) Results of studies from the Women's Health Practice Based Research Network related to harassment and sexual assault.

"(3) Data collected on incidents of sexual harassment and sexual assault.

"(4) A description of any actions taken by the Secretary during the year preceding the date of the report to stop harassment and sexual assault at facilities of the Department.

"(5) An assessment of the implementation of the training required in subsection (a)(5).

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VA-20-0908-B-000008

"(6) A list of resources the Secretary determines necessary to prevent harassment and sexual assault at facilities of the Department.".

(b) TECHNICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by adding after the item relating to section 532 the following new item:

"533. Anti-harassment and anti-sexual assault policy.".

(c) DEADLINE.—The Secretary shall carry out section 533 of such title, as added by subsection (a), not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act.

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<section id="H4E5865A5A0F24F16979A803C61F70D3C"><enum>533.</enum><header>Anti-harassment and anti-sexual assault policy</header>
<subsection id="H1D28EA828D934F68A75E8FE7FAE472AE"><enum>(a)</enum><header>Establishment</header><text display-inline="yes-display-inline">The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall establish a comprehensive policy to end harassment and sexual assault, including sexual and gender-based harassment, at all facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs. This policy shall include the following:</text>
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AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

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<toc regeneration="no-regeneration">
<toc-entry level="section">533. Anti-harassment and anti-sexual assault policy.</toc-entry></toc><after-quoted-block>.</after-quoted-block></quoted-block></subsection>
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</legis-body>
</bill>

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

From: RLW
Sent: Mon, 23 Sep 2019 12:32:39 +0000
To: Missal, Michael J. (OIG)
Cc: Byrne, Jim;Powers, Pamela
Subject: Letter to SecVA
Attachments: 2019.9.19 Letter to VA Sec Wilkie from CH re investigation of sexual assault at DC VA.pdf, Harassment_xml.pdf
Importance: High

Mike:

(b)(5); (b)(3):5 U.S.C. App 3 (IG Act)

regarding an incident at the DA VAMC on Friday . Regardless, I am asking that you investigate this very serious matter and make it a priority for your team. I have taken the liberty of cc'ing the Deputy Attorney General should you need to call on his offices.

(b)(5); (b)(3):5 U.S.C. App 3 (IG Act)

I have attached the original email from the Committee for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Robert Wilkie
Secretary

From: (b)(6) @mail.house.gov>
Date: Friday, Sep 20, 2019, 5:12 PM
To: Tucker, Brooks (b)(6) @va.gov>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Letter to SecVA

Brooks –

Once you get a chance to read this, please give me a call at your earliest convenience. 765-914-(b)(6)

(b)(6)

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(b)(6)
Staff Director
House Veterans Affairs Committee
Chairman Mark Takano (CA-41)



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DEMOCRATS
MARK TAKANO, CALIFORNIA, CHAIRMAN
JULIA BROWNLEY, CALIFORNIA
KATHLEEN M. RICE, NEW YORK
CONOR LAMB, PENNSYLVANIA
MIKE LEVIN, CALIFORNIA
ANTHONY BRINDISI, NEW YORK
MAX ROSE, NEW YORK
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ELAINE G. LURIA, VIRGINIA
SUSIE LEE, NEVADA
JOE CUNNINGHAM, SOUTH CAROLINA
GILBERT R. CISNEROS, JR., CALIFORNIA
COLLIN C. PETERSON, MINNESOTA
GREGORIO KILILI CAMACHO SABLAN, NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
COLIN Z. ALLRED, TEXAS
LAUREN UNDERWOOD, ILLINOIS

RAY KELLEY
STAFF DIRECTOR

U.S. House of Representatives
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
ONE HUNDRED SIXTEENTH CONGRESS
B-234 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
http://veterans.house.gov

REPUBLICANS
DAVID P. ROE, TENNESSEE, RANKING
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DAN MEUSER, PENNSYLVANIA
STEVE WATKINS, KANSAS
CHIP ROY, TEXAS
W. GREGORY STEUBE, FLORIDA

JON TOWERS
REPUBLICAN STAFF DIRECTOR

September 20, 2019

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

Dear Mr. Secretary:

On September 20, 2019, at approximately 11 a.m., Ms. Andrea Goldstein, a Professional Staff Member of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, was sexually assaulted in the atrium of the Washington, D.C. VA Medical Center (DC VAMC) while waiting for her medical appointment.

The atrium café workers and employees at the Information Desk witnessed the assault. Instead of taking immediate action to intervene or assist her, they interacted with the assailant after the assault and took no action. The staff at the Information Desk only referred her to the DC VAMC Patient Advocate. The Patient Advocate also failed to act or render any assistance when she reported the assault and made her wait to make her report. The first employee at the Medical Center to act and immediately call the police, was the doctor she was scheduled to see— the fourth individual notified after the incident. While the VA police officer was working on Ms. Goldstein's complaint, the police officer stated that she too had been sexually harassed by individuals at the DC VAMC while in uniform and on duty, and that she was aware of individuals being sexually harassed and assaulted in various locations on the DC VAMC campus.

This letter serves as a notice that the Committee is opening a Congressional investigation into the allegations outlined above, and other incidents of sexual harassment and assault at the DC VAMC. I will also be requesting an investigation by the VA Inspector General into the nature and frequency of instances of sexual harassment and assault, sex and gender-based harassment, and verbal and physical assault occurring at VA facilities throughout the country, and whether VA employees take appropriate actions when these incidents are reported. My staff have received reports that patients, especially women veterans, frequently experience sexual harassment and have been victims of sexual assault at VA medical facilities. These victims also report that actions taken by VA employees to appropriately address these incidents are inconsistent and often unsatisfactory.

Additionally, I request that you immediately take the following actions:

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1. Arrest, or refer to local law enforcement for arrest, the individual accused of sexually assaulting Ms. Goldstein and investigate her allegations of sexual assault;
2. Remove this individual from DC VA Medical Center property, and prohibit this individual from accessing VA property until conclusion of the criminal investigation and disposition of the case;
3. Request an investigation by the VA Office of Inspector General and other federal law enforcement authorities into incidents of sexual assault and harassment at the DC VA Medical Center;
4. Conduct and mandate bystander intervention training for all employees at the DC VA Medical Center, and mandate reporting of all incidents of sexual harassment and assault;
5. Provide video footage, access to witnesses and other parties involved, police reports, documents, and other materials requested by the Committee on Veterans' Affairs that will aid in the Committee's investigation of incidents of sexual harassment and assault at the DC VAMC.

I also request the following additional actions:

1. Establish a Department-wide anti-harassment and anti-sexual assault policy including elements outlined in the enclosed draft legislation and provide technical assistance to the Committee on the enclosed draft legislation.

No veteran, family member, caregiver, or VA employee should be the victim of sexual assault or harassment at a VA facility. Further, every VA employee should be trained to take immediate action, including intervening to prevent further assault or harassment, contacting law enforcement, and providing aid and assistance to individuals reporting sexual harassment and assault.

Should you have any questions about this request, please contact (b)(6) Committee General Counsel, at (202) 225 (b)(6) or at (b)(6) @mail.house.gov. Thank you for your prompt attention to this request.

Sincerely,

Mark Takano

Mark Takano
Chairman

Enclosures: Discussion Draft, to amend title 38 United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish and implement a comprehensive anti-harassment and anti-sexual assault policy of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

cc: The Honorable Michael J. Missal
Inspector General
Department of Veterans Affairs

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[DISCUSSION DRAFT]

116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. _____

To amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish and implement a comprehensive anti-harassment and anti-sexual assault policy of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Ms. BROWNLEY of California introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on _____

A BILL

To amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish and implement a comprehensive anti-harassment and anti-sexual assault policy of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

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SECTION 1. ANTI-HARASSMENT AND ANTI-SEXUAL ASSAULT POLICY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter II of chapter 5 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

"§ 533. Anti-harassment and anti-sexual assault policy

"(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall establish a comprehensive policy to end harassment and sexual assault, including sexual and gender-based harassment, at all facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs. This policy shall include the following:

"(1) Responses to incidents of harassment and sexual assault committed by any veteran or other public visitor within a facility of the Department.

"(2) Responses to incidents of harassment and sexual assault of any veteran or other public visitor within a facility of the Department.

"(3) A process for reporting and responding to harassment and sexual assault described in paragraph (1).

"(4) A process for reporting and responding to harassment and sexual assault described in paragraph (2).

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VA-20-0908-B-000018

"(5) Mandatory annual training for employees and contractors of the Department regarding how to report and address harassment and sexual assault described in paragraphs (1) and (2).

"(6) Annual distribution of anti-harassment and anti-sexual assault educational materials by mail or email to each individual entitled to a benefit under a law administered by the Secretary.

"(7) The prominent display of anti-harassment and anti-sexual assault messages in each facility of the Department, including how to report harassment and sexual assault at such facility.

"(8) The posting of anti-harassment and anti-sexual assault banners on websites of the Department, including eBenefits.va.gov and myHealthEVet.va.gov.

"(b) POINTS OF CONTACT.—The Secretary shall designate, as a point of contact to receive reports of harassment and sexual assault—

"(1) at least one individual at each facility of the Department, with regards to that facility;

"(2) at least one individual employed in each Veterans Integrated Service Network ('VISN'), with regards to facilities in that VISN; and

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

"(3) at least one individual employed at the Central Office of the Department to track reports of harassment across the Department, disaggregated by facility.

"(c) REPORTING.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the House of Representatives an annual report on harassment and sexual assault in facilities of the Department. Each such report shall include the following:

"(1) Results of harassment and sexual assault programming, including the End Harassment program.

"(2) Results of studies from the Women's Health Practice Based Research Network related to harassment and sexual assault.

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"(4) A description of any actions taken by the Secretary during the year preceding the date of the report to stop harassment and sexual assault at facilities of the Department.

"(5) An assessment of the implementation of the training required in subsection (a)(5).

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"(6) A list of resources the Secretary determines necessary to prevent harassment and sexual assault at facilities of the Department.".

(b) TECHNICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by adding after the item relating to section 532 the following new item:

"533. Anti-harassment and anti-sexual assault policy.".

(c) DEADLINE.—The Secretary shall carry out section 533 of such title, as added by subsection (a), not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act.

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<signature-line display="no">(Original Signature of Member)</signature-line>
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</action>
<legis-type>A BILL</legis-type>
<official-title>To amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish and implement a comprehensive anti-harassment and anti-sexual assault policy of the Department of Veterans Affairs.</official-title>
</form>
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AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

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</legis-body>
</bill>

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

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Sent: Mon, 23 Sep 2019 15:07:49 +0000
To: Tucker, Brooks
Subject: FW: Letter to SecVA
Attachments: 2019.9.19 Letter to VA Sec Wilkie from CH re investigation of sexual assault at DC VA.pdf, Harassment_xml.pdf
Importance: High

From: Wilkie, Robert L., Jr. **On Behalf Of** RLW
Sent: Monday, September 23, 2019 8:43 AM
To: Missal, Michael J. (OIG) (b)(6) @va.gov>
Cc: Byrne, Jim (b)(6) @va.gov>; Powers, Pamela (b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) @usdoj.gov' (b)(6) @usdoj.gov>
Subject: Letter to SecVA
Importance: High

Mike:

(b)(5); (b)(3):5 U.S.C. App 3 (IG Act)

(b)(5); (b)(3):5 U.S.C. App 3 (IG Act) Regardless, I am asking that you investigate this very serious matter and make it an immediate priority for your team. I have taken the liberty of cc'ing the Deputy Attorney General should you need to call on his offices.

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I have attached the original email from the Committee for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Robert Wilkie
Secretary

From: (b)(6) @mail.house.gov>
Date: Friday, Sep 20, 2019, 5:12 PM

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

To: Tucker, Brooks <(b)(6) @va.gov>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Letter to SecVA

Brooks –

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(b)(6)

(b)(6)
Staff Director
House Veterans Affairs Committee
Chairman Mark Takano (CA-41)



AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

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STAFF DIRECTOR

U.S. House of Representatives
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
ONE HUNDRED SIXTEENTH CONGRESS
B-234 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
http://veterans.house.gov

REPUBLICANS
DAVID P. ROE, TENNESSEE, RANKING
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JON TOWERS
REPUBLICAN STAFF DIRECTOR

September 20, 2019

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

Dear Mr. Secretary:

On September 20, 2019, at approximately 11 a.m., Ms. Andrea Goldstein, a Professional Staff Member of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, was sexually assaulted in the atrium of the Washington, D.C. VA Medical Center (DC VAMC) while waiting for her medical appointment.

The atrium café workers and employees at the Information Desk witnessed the assault. Instead of taking immediate action to intervene or assist her, they interacted with the assailant after the assault and took no action. The staff at the Information Desk only referred her to the DC VAMC Patient Advocate. The Patient Advocate also failed to act or render any assistance when she reported the assault and made her wait to make her report. The first employee at the Medical Center to act and immediately call the police, was the doctor she was scheduled to see— the fourth individual notified after the incident. While the VA police officer was working on Ms. Goldstein's complaint, the police officer stated that she too had been sexually harassed by individuals at the DC VAMC while in uniform and on duty, and that she was aware of individuals being sexually harassed and assaulted in various locations on the DC VAMC campus.

This letter serves as a notice that the Committee is opening a Congressional investigation into the allegations outlined above, and other incidents of sexual harassment and assault at the DC VAMC. I will also be requesting an investigation by the VA Inspector General into the nature and frequency of instances of sexual harassment and assault, sex and gender-based harassment, and verbal and physical assault occurring at VA facilities throughout the country, and whether VA employees take appropriate actions when these incidents are reported. My staff have received reports that patients, especially women veterans, frequently experience sexual harassment and have been victims of sexual assault at VA medical facilities. These victims also report that actions taken by VA employees to appropriately address these incidents are inconsistent and often unsatisfactory.

Additionally, I request that you immediately take the following actions:

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1. Arrest, or refer to local law enforcement for arrest, the individual accused of sexually assaulting Ms. Goldstein and investigate her allegations of sexual assault;
2. Remove this individual from DC VA Medical Center property, and prohibit this individual from accessing VA property until conclusion of the criminal investigation and disposition of the case;
3. Request an investigation by the VA Office of Inspector General and other federal law enforcement authorities into incidents of sexual assault and harassment at the DC VA Medical Center;
4. Conduct and mandate bystander intervention training for all employees at the DC VA Medical Center, and mandate reporting of all incidents of sexual harassment and assault;
5. Provide video footage, access to witnesses and other parties involved, police reports, documents, and other materials requested by the Committee on Veterans' Affairs that will aid in the Committee's investigation of incidents of sexual harassment and assault at the DC VAMC.

I also request the following additional actions:

1. Establish a Department-wide anti-harassment and anti-sexual assault policy including elements outlined in the enclosed draft legislation and provide technical assistance to the Committee on the enclosed draft legislation.

No veteran, family member, caregiver, or VA employee should be the victim of sexual assault or harassment at a VA facility. Further, every VA employee should be trained to take immediate action, including intervening to prevent further assault or harassment, contacting law enforcement, and providing aid and assistance to individuals reporting sexual harassment and assault.

Should you have any questions about this request, please contact (b)(6) Committee General Counsel, at (202) 225-(b)(6) or at (b)(6) @mail.house.gov. Thank you for your prompt attention to this request.

Sincerely,

Mark Takano

Mark Takano
Chairman

Enclosures: Discussion Draft, to amend title 38 United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish and implement a comprehensive anti-harassment and anti-sexual assault policy of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

cc: The Honorable Michael J. Missal
Inspector General
Department of Veterans Affairs

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[DISCUSSION DRAFT]

116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. _____

To amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish and implement a comprehensive anti-harassment and anti-sexual assault policy of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Ms. BROWNLEY of California introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on _____

A BILL

To amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish and implement a comprehensive anti-harassment and anti-sexual assault policy of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

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SECTION 1. ANTI-HARASSMENT AND ANTI-SEXUAL ASSAULT POLICY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter II of chapter 5 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

"§ 533. Anti-harassment and anti-sexual assault policy

"(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall establish a comprehensive policy to end harassment and sexual assault, including sexual and gender-based harassment, at all facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs. This policy shall include the following:

"(1) Responses to incidents of harassment and sexual assault committed by any veteran or other public visitor within a facility of the Department.

"(2) Responses to incidents of harassment and sexual assault of any veteran or other public visitor within a facility of the Department.

"(3) A process for reporting and responding to harassment and sexual assault described in paragraph (1).

"(4) A process for reporting and responding to harassment and sexual assault described in paragraph (2).

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"(5) Mandatory annual training for employees and contractors of the Department regarding how to report and address harassment and sexual assault described in paragraphs (1) and (2).

"(6) Annual distribution of anti-harassment and anti-sexual assault educational materials by mail or email to each individual entitled to a benefit under a law administered by the Secretary.

"(7) The prominent display of anti-harassment and anti-sexual assault messages in each facility of the Department, including how to report harassment and sexual assault at such facility.

"(8) The posting of anti-harassment and anti-sexual assault banners on websites of the Department, including eBenefits.va.gov and myHealthEVet.va.gov.

"(b) POINTS OF CONTACT.—The Secretary shall designate, as a point of contact to receive reports of harassment and sexual assault—

"(1) at least one individual at each facility of the Department, with regards to that facility;

"(2) at least one individual employed in each Veterans Integrated Service Network ('VISN'), with regards to facilities in that VISN; and

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"(3) at least one individual employed at the Central Office of the Department to track reports of harassment across the Department, disaggregated by facility.

"(c) REPORTING.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the House of Representatives an annual report on harassment and sexual assault in facilities of the Department. Each such report shall include the following:

"(1) Results of harassment and sexual assault programming, including the End Harassment program.

"(2) Results of studies from the Women's Health Practice Based Research Network related to harassment and sexual assault.

"(3) Data collected on incidents of sexual harassment and sexual assault.

"(4) A description of any actions taken by the Secretary during the year preceding the date of the report to stop harassment and sexual assault at facilities of the Department.

"(5) An assessment of the implementation of the training required in subsection (a)(5).

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VA-20-0908-B-000032

"(6) A list of resources the Secretary determines necessary to prevent harassment and sexual assault at facilities of the Department.".

(b) TECHNICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by adding after the item relating to section 532 the following new item:

"533. Anti-harassment and anti-sexual assault policy.".

(c) DEADLINE.—The Secretary shall carry out section 533 of such title, as added by subsection (a), not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act.

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</action>
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<subsection id="H1D28EA828D934F68A75E8FE7FAE472AE"><enum>(a)</enum><header>Establishment</header><text display-inline="yes-display-inline">The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall establish a comprehensive policy to end harassment and sexual assault, including sexual and gender-based harassment, at all facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs. This policy shall include the following:</text>
<paragraph id="H19108BCE075E49D2B947CD0924EBFA97"><enum>(1)</enum><text>Responses to incidents

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of harassment and sexual assault committed by any veteran or other public visitor within a facility of the Department.</text></paragraph>
<paragraph id="H584FED84177C4DA8AC082EAF5C7B081C"><enum>(2)</enum><text display-inline="yes-display-inline">Responses to incidents of harassment and sexual assault of any veteran or other public visitor within a facility of the Department.</text></paragraph>
<paragraph id="H24F811DB70774B22B9BB8198CBAB1AF9"><enum>(3)</enum><text>A process for reporting and responding to harassment and sexual assault described in paragraph (1).</text></paragraph>
<paragraph id="H1A092882C79E4AC0A85B7D726A7665A9"><enum>(4)</enum><text display-inline="yes-display-inline">A process for reporting and responding to harassment and sexual assault described in paragraph (2).</text></paragraph>
<paragraph id="H4D99FC2362FB471A8052F376F5A88571"><enum>(5)</enum><text display-inline="yes-display-inline">Mandatory annual training for employees and contractors of the Department regarding how to report and address harassment and sexual assault described in paragraphs (1) and (2).</text></paragraph>
<paragraph id="H3ABAE5D003DC428C9BFB5415B5C7F078"><enum>(6)</enum><text display-inline="yes-display-inline">Annual distribution of anti-harassment and anti-sexual assault educational materials by mail or email to each individual entitled to a benefit under a law administered by the Secretary.</text></paragraph>
<paragraph id="HA4D0AB81C8784BF9B689EAE5BC831D21"><enum>(7)</enum><text>The prominent display of anti-harassment and anti-sexual assault messages in each facility of the Department, including how to report harassment and sexual assault at such facility.</text></paragraph>
<paragraph id="HC36011445DAB4A7AB7809539D05CEAA2"><enum>(8)</enum><text display-inline="yes-display-inline">The posting of anti-harassment and anti-sexual assault banners on websites of the Department, including eBenefits.va.gov and myHealthEVet.va.gov.</text></paragraph> </subsection>
<subsection id="H6D3899C7D4604A648F7A716EFCEF6569"><enum>(b)</enum><header>Points of contact</header><text>The Secretary shall designate, as a point of contact to receive reports of harassment and sexual assaultâ€”</text>
<paragraph id="H9525CF0AEA024B4798787C87C63AA09F"><enum>(1)</enum><text>at least one individual at each facility of the Department, with regards to that facility;</text></paragraph>
<paragraph id="H2342787E7C144CAEB2DAAC57424480A9"><enum>(2)</enum><text>at least one individual employed in each Veterans Integrated Service Network (<quote>VISN</quote>), with regards to facilities in that VISN; and</text></paragraph>
<paragraph id="HA59BA43B404E4E7FA3AFA7B3B276076B"><enum>(3)</enum><text display-inline="yes-display-inline">at least one individual employed at the Central Office of the Department to track reports of harassment across the Department, disaggregated by facility.</text></paragraph></subsection>
<subsection id="H9A0017620EFF4C3B96EE7B4AE3E6DE89"><enum>(c)</enum><header>Reporting</header><text display-inline="yes-display-inline">The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committees on Veteransâ€™ Affairs of the Senate and the House of Representatives an annual report on harassment and sexual assault in facilities of the Department. Each such report shall include the following:</text>
<paragraph id="H599642D0479E4A959C9964D47900AE08"><enum>(1)</enum><text display-inline="yes-display-inline">Results of harassment and sexual assault programming, including the End Harassment program.</text></paragraph>
<paragraph id="H7B9CB375180042298A568C1A529A4A41"><enum>(2)</enum><text display-inline="yes-display-inline">Results of studies from the Womenâ€™s Health Practice Based Research Network related to harassment and sexual assault.</text></paragraph>
<paragraph id="HCA9A2C16819B4AA0A129A8E9046915D7" commented="no"><enum>(3)</enum><text display-inline="yes-display-inline">Data collected on incidents of sexual harassment and sexual assault.</text></paragraph>
<paragraph id="H311C5BBD752B401C8F2658BAC2C1C0FF"><enum>(4)</enum><text display-inline="yes-display-inline">A description of any actions taken by the Secretary during the year preceding the date of the report to stop harassment and sexual assault at facilities of the Department.</text></paragraph>
<paragraph id="H0EDAA98637524BB19CE0CFDEE11D2A31"><enum>(5)</enum><text display-inline="yes-display-inline">An assessment of the implementation of the training required in subsection (a)(5).</text></paragraph>
<paragraph id="HCC43CE1A2E344486A279C208190CF418"><enum>(6)</enum><text display-inline="yes-display-inline">A list of resources the Secretary determines necessary to prevent harassment and sexual assault at facilities of the Department.</text></paragraph></subsection></section><after-quoted-block>.</after-quoted-

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</bill>

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From: Powers, Pamela
Sent: Thu, 3 Oct 2019 11:57:28 +0000
To: Tucker, Brooks;Syrek, Christopher D. (Chris);Hutton, James;Cashour, Curtis;Jensen, Jon M.;Connell, Lawrence B.
Subject: RE: CMR of Note

Concur with all. This might be an opportunity to work with them and better our organization in the process.

Sent with BlackBerry Work
(www.blackberry.com)

From: Tucker, Brooks <(b)(6)@va.gov>
Date: Thursday, Oct 03, 2019, 6:23 AM
To: Powers, Pamela <(b)(6)@va.gov>, Syrek, Christopher D. (Chris) (b)(6)@va.gov>, Hutton, James <(b)(6)@va.gov>, Cashour, Curtis (b)(6)@va.gov>, (b)(6) (b)(6)@va.gov>, Connell, Lawrence B. <(b)(6)@va.gov>
Subject: RE: CMR of Note

Chief: We will need at least one murder board with SMEs and any key leaders prior to going to Hill because Takano's and Brownley's staffers will be looking for anything and everything. Their legislation is now under review by my Leg policy team. Some of what is borne out in your guidance below points to their fact finding visits nationally. Perhaps this is an area where SECVA and Takano can maybe find a way forward without VA being unfairly maligned in press and by HVAC Members at a hearing. (I'm trying to remain optimistic)
Brooks

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(www.blackberry.com)

From: Powers, Pamela <(b)(6)@va.gov>
Date: Thursday, Oct 03, 2019, 6:15 AM
To: Tucker, Brooks (b)(6)@va.gov>, Syrek, Christopher D. (Chris) (b)(6)@va.gov>, Hutton, James (b)(6)@va.gov>, Cashour, Curtis (b)(6)@va.gov>, (b)(6) (b)(6)@va.gov>, Connell, Lawrence B. <(b)(6)@va.gov>
Subject: RE: CMR of Note

(b)(6) nd Larry.
I tend to think the problem lies in the reporting rather than the fact that we have a lot more assaults across the enterprise, but I agree that we need to do a root cause analysis.
There are many problems with this report, as I am finding out as I start to ask questions about the report and our policies. The main problem is that it's just a summary of the assaults and

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misconduct as reported by the facilities with no background, and VHA didn't even get the opportunity to coord...which is a problem in itself.
Each facility is interpreting the policy differently. Some are being very conservative in their reporting, such as St Cloud (24 assaults), which reports every inappropriate touch by a dementia patient to a nurse as an assault, when the patient doesn't even know what they are doing. Others may be confusing what constitutes misconduct vs an assault. If you look at the data, we had similar numbers of total assaults two years ago but the majority were considered misconduct and not assault. This year that total number is the same but the assaults vs misconduct is the opposite. Why? And last year was an anomaly, why?
I think a few things need to happen, and this is what I recommend we brief to Congress when providing this CR:
- Need VHA and OSLE to do a thorough review of our policies for reporting and handling of incidents , to include substantiated and non substantiated reporting. This might be a great project for our Presidential Fellow, who is a police officer and familiar with civilian practices.
- Need training to the field on what constitutes misconduct, harassment, and assault. Better reporting structures, processes, etc. Should look at DoD, DOJ and and other federal agencies.
- Need to review our education and training for employees and veterans on respect in the workplace and how to report issues.

- Brief Congress that after reviewing our raw data, we believe it's time to do a thorough review of our policies, processes and reporting structures. While I hate to give Takano a win, this report in itself shows that we may have some problems. But not necessarily in the way they think.

Am I missing anything? Recommend we meet early next week to develop the game plan for the congressional briefs. I will also discuss this with our fellow and VHA regarding the policy review.
Pam

From: Tucker, Brooks <(b)(6) @va.gov>**Date:** Thursday, Oct 03, 2019, 4:14 AM
To: Syrek, Christopher D. (Chris) <(b)(6) @va.gov>, Powers, Pamela (b)(6) @va.gov>, Hutton, James <(b)(6) @va.gov>, Cashour, Curtis <(b)(6) @va.gov>
Subject: RE: CMR of Note

Maybe this is already in motion, but as we move toward a Congressional briefing, do we know where the larger clusters or preponderance of the substantiated and unsubstantiated reports came from across the VHA enterprise? VISN and Facility by facility? Trends, emergent problems being amplified for leaders? And if so what is the VISN or Facility's Action Plan to do engage employees and Veterans face to face, conduct climate surveys and root cause analyses to locally identify customer service and general attitude problems, intervene, mitigate and educate to possibly reduce prevalence?

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(www.blackberry.com)

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From: Syrek, Christopher D. (Chris) (b)(6) va.gov>
Date: Friday, Sep 27, 2019, 3:35 PM
To: Powers, Pamela (b)(6) @va.gov>, Tucker, Brooks (b)(6) va.gov>, Hutton, James (b)(6) @va.gov>, Cashour, Curti (b)(6) va.gov>
Subject: CMR of Note

All – I don't typically flag CMRs for the team but wanted to make you aware of this one as it shows a fairly substantial increase on sexual assaults. Given this weeks events this could draw interest.

It will be transmitted to the Committee early next week upon SECVA signature.

Christopher D. Syrek
Deputy Chief of Staff
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Washington, D.C. 20420 | (202) 461 (b)(6)

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From: RLW
Sent: Fri, 13 Dec 2019 13:24:02 +0000
To: RLW
Subject: Breakfast Mtg w/ Congresswoman Julia Brownley
Attachments: Rep. Brownley, Julia (D-CA-26).docx, EBS for SECVA-Rep Brownley_In-PersonBreakfast_1-29-2020.docx

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Rep. Julia Brownley (D-CA) Last Updated: Janurary 14, 2020
26th District, Most of Ventura County -- Oxnard, Thousand Oaks



Residence: Westlake Vilage
Born: Aug. 28, 1952; Aiken, S.C.
Religion: Episcopalian
Family: Divorced; two children
Education: Mount Vernon College, B.A. 1975 (political science); American U., M.B.A. 1979
Career: Homemaker; office furniture company product manager; shipping equipment company sales manager
Military Service: None.
Political Highlights: Candidate for Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District Board of Education, 1992; Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District Board of Education, 1994-2006 (president, 1997, 2002, 2006); Calif. Assembly, 2006-2012.
First Elected: 2012 (4th term)
Last Elected: 2018 (61.94%)

Committee and Subcommittee Assignments

- Veterans' Affairs (2nd of 16 Democrats)
  - Health
  - Technology Modernization
- Transportation and Infrastructure (16th of 37 Democrats)
  - Aviation
  - Highways and Transit
- Seclect Climate Crisis (4th of 9 Democrats)

Leadership Positions and Party Committee Assignments

- None

Selected Caucus and Special Organization Memberships

- Women Veterans Congressional Task Force
- Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues
- New Democrat Coalition

Interest

- Father, brother, and uncle are Veterans (Hearing comment).
- Two children, Fred, currently attending UCLA Medical School, and Hannah, recently completed her Masters degree in Belgium.
- Very focused on providing increased access to Veterans in Oxnard area.

VA Issues

Facilities in District: Oxnard CBOC, Intake Site at Point Mugu NAS/Port Hueneme NCBC

VHA Issues

- **Women Veterans Health:** "As Chairwoman of health subcommittee and the Womens Veterans TF, goal is to make the invisible woman veteran visible."

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  - Concerns in how women Veterans may be uniquely impacted by MISSION Act and how the VA ensures equitable, integrated care for women.
  - Concerns regarding VA's standards to determine where mammograms should be placed.
- **Dental:** Supports providing dental care to Veterans in the same way medical care is provided.
- **Suicide:** Seeks to address the high rate of suicide amongst Veterans and looking for solutions to reduce the rate, especially in women.
  - Has expressed concerns regarding the differences between men and women receiving therapy treatment for MH/BH.
  - Has asked the OMHSP to ensure data regarding LGBT status during the next suicide data report.
- **TRUST House:** Congresswoman has expressed interest in the TRUST House, which is VA's only women-only residential SUD program in the nation. VHA responded stating that currently, every VISN has capacity to provide mental health residential treatment for women Veterans. There are over 100 programs that provide mixed gender residential treatment that have a separate and secured unit or wing for women Veterans. Nationally, there are actually twelve programs that serve women only or that have a gender specific treatment track designed to serve women Veterans.
- **Caregivers:** Opposes restriction of eligibility through cuts to the caregivers program.
- **Mobility:** Advocates for the increased use of "telemedicine" in order to allow Veterans to access their doctors regardless of location.
- **Sexual Assault:** Seeks to address issues of sexual assault in the military and aims to enact reforms to reduce instances.
- **May 2, 2019:** Women Veterans' Access to Healthcare Hearing.
- **Oct 2nd, 2019:** Part of Congressional delegation visiting Pacific Islands HCS. The Delegation was greeted by VAPIHCS Director, Jennifer Gutowski and other members of the Executive Leadership team, as well as Sergio Chao, Director of the VBA Honolulu Regional Office and Colonel Mary Krueger, Commander Tripler Army Medical Center.
- **October 6, 2019**: A congressional delegation of four members of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs visited the VA Manila Regional Office, Outpatient Clinic in the Republic of the Philippines, and the ABMC to meet with staff and Veterans.
- **November 1st, 2019:** Met with leadership of VA Boston HS (VABHS) at the Jamaica Plain (JP) Campus of VA Boston Healthcare System. Chairwoman Brownley was joined by Congresswoman Lori Trahan (MA-03) midway through the visit.

VBA Issues

- **Child Care:** Supports expanding child care options for when primary caretakers have VA medical appointments.

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- **Job Training:** Supports increased training, employment opportunities, and reducing barriers to starting small businesses, especially for those with service-connected disabilities.
- **Homelessness:** Advocates for job training and housing for homeless Veterans and their families.
- **Transgender Issues:** Opposes ban on medically necessary treatments for transgender Veterans and urges the VA to cover gender reassignment surgery.
- **Women:** Introduced legislation that would improve access to healthcare, and build supportive networks for women Veterans.
- **Legal Issues:** Supports working with community to assist Veterans caught in criminal justics system who are battling with mental health and substance abuse issues.

NCA Issues

- None

VA-Related Legislation (Sponsored)

116th Congress:

H.R.3224 - To amend: title 38, United States Code, to provide for increased access to Department of Veterans Affairs medical care for women Veterans.

H.R.1722 - Build a Better VA Act: To amend title 38, United States Code, to require congressional approval before the appropriation of funds for the Department of Veterans Affairs major medical facility leases.

H.R.2798 - Building Supportive Networks for Women Veterans Act: To amend title 38, United States Code, to make permanent the pilot program on counseling in retreat settings for women Veterans newly separated from service in the Armed Forces.

H.R.2094 - CHAMPVA Children's Care Protection Act of 2019: To amend title 38, United States Code, to increase the maximum age for children eligible for medical care under the CHAMPVA program, and for other purposes.

H.R.2224 - Homeless Veterans with Children Reintegration Act: To amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Labor to prioritize the provision of services to homeless Veterans with dependent children in carrying out homeless Veterans reintegration programs, and for other purposes.

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H.R.1779 - To amend: titles 10 and 38, United States Code, to authorize a person awarded the Medal of Honor to designate an individual to receive the special pension after death, and for other purposes.

H.R.2223 - Helping Homeless Veterans Act of 2019: To amend title 38, United States Code, to make permanent certain programs that assist homeless Veterans and other Veterans with special needs, and for other purposes.

H.R.1721 - Veterans Healthcare Improvement Act: To direct the Comptroller General of the United States to conduct reviews of certain budget requests of the President for the medical care accounts of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

H.R.445 - Help Hire Our Heroes Act: To amend the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 to make permanent the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program, and for other purposes.

H.R.592 - Protect Veterans from Financial Fraud Act of 2019: To amend title 38, United States Code, to ensure that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs repays the misused benefits of Veterans with fiduciaries, to establish an appeals process for determinations by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs of Veterans' mental capacity, and for other purposes.

H.R.444 - Reduce Unemployment for Veterans of All Ages Act of 2019: To amend title 38, United States Code, to eliminate the period of eligibility for the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment program of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

H.R.96 - To amend: title 38, United States Code, to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to furnish dental care in the same manner as any other medical service, and for other purposes.

H.R.1963 - Expanding Care for Veterans Act: To expand the research and education on and delivery of complementary and integrative medicine to Veterans, and for other purposes.

H.R.840 - Veterans' Access to Child Care Act: To amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide child care assistance to Veterans receiving certain medical services provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

H.R.95 - Homeless Veteran Families Act: To amend title 38, United States Code, to ensure that children of homeless Veterans are included in the calculation of the amounts of certain per diem grants.

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EXECUTIVE BRIEFING SUMMARY

Congresswoman Brownley (D-CA-26)
Wednesday, January 28, 2019
8:00 A.M.
In-Person Breakfast in SECVA Suite

POINT OF CONTACT: (b)(6) Congressional Relations Officer, VA-OCLA, (b)(6) @va.gov; 202-461-(b)(6)

PURPOSE OF EVENT/MEETING:

☐ Decisional	☐ Informational	☐ Pre-Event
☐ Remarks	☐ Other	x Courtesy Call

OVERVIEW OF EVENT:
Congresswoman Brownley is a fourth-term Congresswoman and chair of the House Veterans Affair's Subcommittee on Health. Previous breakfasts/lunches with other Committee Members and the Secretary have proved productive and well received. Congresswoman Brownley returned from a trip to South Dakota last week where she was joined by Dr. Kameron Matthews, DUSH for Health for Community Care. They attended a listening session with members of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe on the topic of Healthcare and visited IHS/THP partner sites. Also fresh on the mind of Brownley may be the sexual assault allegation—by HVAC staffer, Andrea Goldstein—at the DC VAMC last fall. The Congresswoman released a joint statement with Chairman Takano January 15 addressing calling the Secretary's earlier response to Takano as "flippant" and "outrageous" and "shockingly tone deaf." In their release, they refer to "shaming" VA (This release is also now absent from Takano's web site, but still on Brownley's). The Congresswoman's focus will likely be on the Secretary's priorities for 2020 and an opportunity for here to discuss women's health, sexual assault, West LA and other Veteran issues.

SECRETARY'S ROLE:
Provide an open forum for the Congresswoman to speak freely. Assure the Congresswoman VA is addressing her concerns of women Veterans and how they may be uniquely impacted by MISSION Act and the VA is ensuring equitable and integrated care for women.

ATTENDEES:

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

Robert L. Wilkie, Secretary
Brooks Tucker, Assistant Secretary, Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs
Congresswoman Brownley (D-CA-26)

OBJECTIVE(S):

- Outline proactive approach VA is taking to address mental health issues as it relates to Women Veterans' physical and mental health

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- This is a proactive offer at the request of the Secretary
- Secretary meet with Congresswoman Brownley and Brownley will lead the discussion
- Veterans' Affairs Committee (2nd of 16 Democrats)
- Chair, HVAC Subcommittee on Health and member of HVAC-EO
- Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District Board of Education, 1994-2006 (president, 1997, 2002, 2006); Calif. Assembly, 2006-2012
- Former Homemaker, office furniture company product manager, shipping equipment company sales manager

LOGISTICS:

Upon arrival to the lobby at 810 Vermont Ave, NW, the Congresswoman will be met by a Protocol Officer who will escort her up to the Secretary's Suite.

Enclosures:

1. Congressional Bio

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

From: Powers, Pamela
Sent: Thu, 16 Jan 2020 21:39:37 +0000
To: Cashour, Curtis;Tucker, Brooks;Hudson, William A. (OGC);Syrek, Christopher D. (Chris);Bader, Christine E.;Byrne, Jim;Hutton, James
Cc: Hipolit, Richard (OGC);Haverstock, Cathy
Subject: RE: Memo to HVAC

What time was this released?

Pamela Powers
VA Chief of Staff

From: Cashour, Curtis <(b)(6) @va.gov>
Date: Thursday, Jan 16, 2020, 11:21 AM
To: Powers, Pamela <(b)(6) @va.gov>, Tucker, Brooks <(b)(6) @va.gov>, Hudson, William A. (OGC) (b)(6) @va.gov>, Syrek, Christopher D. (Chris) (b)(6) @va.gov>, Bader, Christine E. <(b)(6) @va.gov>, Byrne, Jim <(b)(6) @va.gov>, Hutton, James (b)(6) @va.gov>
Cc: Hipolit, Richard (OGC) <(b)(6) @va.gov>, Haverstock, Cathy <(b)(6) @va.gov>
Subject: RE: Memo to HVAC

FYI: The statement that was in the New York Times comes from the below news release the committee sent out last night. I've highlighted the relevant portion.



For Immediate Release
January 15, 2020

Contact:
Jenni Geurink (202-225-9756)
Carina Armenta (202-225-5811)

Chairman Takano, Congresswoman Brownley Shame VA for Flippant Response to Sexual Assault Allegations

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Chairman Mark Takano (CA-41) and Subcommittee on Health Chairwoman Julia Brownley (CA-26) issued the following statements after VA released a letter calling into question a Committee staffer's allegations of sexual assault at a VA facility this September. In the letter, Secretary Wilkie claimed, "We believe that VA is a safe place for all Veterans to enter and receive care and services, but the unsubstantiated claims raised by you and your staff could deter our veterans from seeking the care they need and deserve." The Members statements are below:

"To cast doubt on credible, serious, and concerning claims about how women are treated at VA is outrageous. Women veterans are already hesitant to come forward and report sexual harassment and sexual assault because they fear being dismissed and retaliated against. I have called for a culture shift at VA. When my staffer bravely came forward in September, she did so in the spirit of wanting other women veterans to feel safe. But the Secretary's flippant letter is only further evidence to my staffer and others that coming forward is punished, speaking out retaliated against, and that a hostile culture at VA is tolerated. Every day women veterans visit VA facilities across the country to access some of the best care available-- care that is specialized to their needs, their service, and their experiences. But the problematic culture of harassment while trying to access care is not new for VA. To point out stark evidence that this culture exists is not a disservice to VA or women veterans," **said Chairman Mark Takano.**

Chairman Takano added, "I am aghast that Secretary Wilkie would think it appropriate to call into question allegations of sexual assault raised by one of our nation's veterans. And for VA-- an agency charged with providing trauma-informed care for survivors of sexual harassment and assault-- to itself retraumatize and defame a fellow veteran, is disgusting. VA has put up posters and held trainings. But Secretary Wilkie has failed to make that training mandatory, treat allegations with the seriousness they deserve, and force VA to confront an unwelcoming culture that can be hostile for women veterans. Those facts being true, it's absurd to suggest that 'VA is a safe place for all Veterans to enter and receive care and services.' I am disappointed that as a cabinet secretary he would sign his name on such a shameful letter. Our veterans deserve better."

"Whether intentional or not, Secretary Willkie's statement illustrates how much work we have ahead of us to make sure all veterans feel supported coming forward when they are harassed or assaulted. The Secretary should apologize and use this as a teachable moment to be a leader in stopping sexual assault at VA facilities, by first and foremost, making sure that no one is shamed or shunned for coming forward," **said Congresswoman Brownley.** "Secretary Wilkie's implication that coming forward to report sexual assault actually hurts women, is a shockingly tone-deaf response, and a bright line that succinctly illustrates the cultural problem that pervades VA. If we've learned anything from the #MeToo movement, it is that being heard and being supported for coming forward is an essential first step to stopping sexual assault and to ending the unfortunate culture that allows it."

###

From: Powers, Pamela <(b)(6) @va.gov>
Sent: Thursday, January 16, 2020 4:16 PM

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

To: Tucker, Brooks (b)(6) @va.gov>; Hudson, William A. (OGC) <(b)(6) @va.gov>; Syrek, Christopher D. (Chris) (b)(6) @va.gov>; Bader, Christine E. (b)(6) @va.gov>; Byrne, Jim (b)(6) @va.gov>; Hutton, James (b)(6) @va.gov>
Cc: Hipolit, Richard (OGC) (b)(6) @va.gov>; Cashour, Curtis <(b)(6) va.gov>; Haverstock, Cathy <(b)(6) @va.gov>
Subject: RE: Memo to HVAC

Hold the memo. We may want to add something in response to the NYT statement by him

Pamela Powers
VA Chief of Staff

From: Tucker, Brooks (b)(6) @va.gov>
Date: Thursday, Jan 16, 2020, 11:05 AM
To: Hudson, William A. (OGC) (b)(6) @va.gov>, Syrek, Christopher D. (Chris) (b)(6) @va.gov>, Bader, Christine E. <(b)(6) @va.gov>, Byrne, Jim <(b)(6) va.gov>, Hutton, James (b)(6) @va.gov>, Powers, Pamela <(b)(6) @va.gov>
Cc: Hipolit, Richard (OGC) (b)(6) @va.gov>, Cashour, Curtis <(b)(6) @va.gov>, Haverstock, Cathy <(b)(6) @va.gov>
Subject: RE: Memo to HVAC

Looks fine to me

Sent with BlackBerry Work
(www.blackberry.com)

From: Hudson, William A. (OGC) <(b)(6) @va.gov>
Date: Thursday, Jan 16, 2020, 4:03 PM
To: Syrek, Christopher D. (Chris) (b)(6) @va.gov>, Tucker, Brooks <(b)(6) va.gov>, Bader, Christine E. (b)(6) @va.gov>, Byrne, Jim (b)(6) va.gov>, Hutton, James (b)(6) @va.gov>, Powers, Pamela (b)(6) @va.gov>
Cc: Hipolit, Richard (OGC) (b)(6) @va.gov>, Cashour, Curtis <(b)(6) @va.gov>, Haverstock, Cathy <(b)(6) @va.gov>
Subject: FW: Memo to HVAC

Attached for initial review. I thought best to remove phrase... (b)(5)
(b)(5)

For review.

VR Bill

From: Powers, Pamela <(b)(6) @va.gov>
Sent: Thursday, January 16, 2020 3:33 PM

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

To: Tucker, Brooks (b)(6) @va.gov>; Hudson, William A. (OGC) (b)(6) @va.gov>; Syrek, Christopher D. (Chris) <(b)(6) @va.gov>; Hutton, James (b)(6) @va.gov>
Subject: Memo to HVAC

Please prepare a memo from Secva to Takano with this info:
———

Dear Mr Chairman,

Thank you for taking time to speak with me while I was on my way to visit our Compact Partners in the Pacific.

You and I share a strong desire to make VA work for all veterans. The incident at the DC VA in September is a case in point. As soon as you alerted me I raised the issue with the VA Inspector General and the Department of Justice, offices that conducted a thorough, four month investigation.

Although I am not privy to the details of the investigation, my statement that claims were unsubstantiated was based on my understanding of the Inspector General's case through discussions with him. If he would not use that term, I will defer to him and accept his characterization that the case is simply closed. In that regard I do believe that you, Dr Roe and the VA are owed a full report from the Inspector General.

Our mutual goal is to ensure that our culture continues to improve and that all of our veteran women and men are safe, feel welcome and feel free to step forward at anytime when they have not been treated with the dignity and the respect that their service to our country deserves.

———.

Pam

Pamela Powers
VA Chief of Staff

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

From: Hayes-Byrd, Jacquelyn
Sent: Mon, 3 Feb 2020 17:32:24 +0000
To: (b)(6)
Cc:
Subject: FW: DACOWITS Collection of Articles of Interest (31 January 2019)
Attachments: News Articles_31 January.pdf

Hi (b)(6)

Perhaps some of these articles can assist you with information and stories for our website and Twitter. I'll see about getting you on this list.

Best,

(b)(6)

-----Original Message-----
From: (b)(6) CIV DODHRA DACOWITS (USA) (b)(6) @mail.mil>
Sent: Friday, January 31, 2020 7:46 AM
To: (b)(6) @mail.mil>
Cc: (b)(6) COL USARMY DODHRA DACOWITS (USA)
<(b)(6) @mail.mil>; (b)(6) CIV DODHRA DACOWITS (USA)
<(b)(6) @mail.mil>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] DACOWITS Collection of Articles of Interest (31 January 2019)

Directors and Staff,

Attached is a collection of recent news articles that may be of interest to your office. The collection of articles relate to women in the workforce issues, as well as matters and policies impacting the successful recruitment, retention, employment, integration, well-being, and treatment of women in the Armed Forces. News articles are shared with DACOWITS members for their continued situational awareness.

** Of note, DACOWITS member, MAJ (Ret.) Pat Locke, USA, is featured in article # 60.

In 1974, DACOWITS recommended that the military service academies be opened to women. Two years later, in 1976, women were admitted to the military service academies for the first time. We currently have three women serving on DACOWITS, who were among the first classes of women to graduate from each military service academy in 1980: USMA - MAJ Locke; USNA - Ms. Mines; and USAFA - Gen Wolfenbarger. MAJ Locke's daughter also graduated from the USMA and is serving in the Army. Gen Wolfenbarger's daughter is a cadet at the USAFA.

V/r,

(b)(6)

Ms. (b)(6)
DACOWITS Program Support Strategic Advisor
4800 Mark Center Drive, Suite 04J25-01, Alexandria, VA 22350
Phone: (703) 693-(b)(6) direct or (703) 697(b)(6) main office
E-mail: (b)(6) @mail.mil
Website: https://dacowits.defense.gov

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services
Articles of Interest
31 January 2020

RECRUITMENT & RETENTION

1. **Army recruiter helped five Illinois siblings enlist**
(10 Jan) Army News, By Maj. Jessica Rovero
It's fairly common to enlist two siblings from the same family, sometimes three, but it is a truly rare occurrence when one recruiter enlists five individuals from one family. Sgt. 1st Class Amber Hansen, an Army recruiter assigned to the Peru Recruiting Station in Peru, Illinois, helped to enlist all five siblings of the Wierzbicki family over the past two years.

2. **Coast Guard wrapping up study on why minority members leave the service**
(15 Jan) Military.com, By Oriana Pawlyk
During the Surface Navy Association's annual symposium, Coast Guard Adm. Charles Ray said the service's goal over the past year has been to explore which policies can be adjusted to prevent people quitting the coastal defense mission. "We cannot afford to not take advantage of all the talented people in our nation," Ray said. He cited a study the Coast Guard completed last year in partnership with the Rand Corp. that analyzed female retention and subsequent solutions to keep more women serving as Coasties. "There was clear evidence that women were leaving the service at proportionately higher rates than men," Ray told Military.com following his speech.

3. **Recruiting Challenges for Chaplains Mirror Other Military Jobs**
(16 Jan) Explore: Stories from around the Defense Department, By C. Todd Lopez
With more than 2,800 chaplains across the U.S. military, representing dozens of faith groups, maintaining adequate manning is a challenge.

4. **Here are the latest Navy retention numbers**
(21 Jan) Navy Times, By Courtney Mabeus
In the face of a booming economy, the Navy kept about 74 percent of its enlistment eligible sailors during fiscal 2019, figures released by the sea service earlier this month show.

5. **Army isn't setting hard recruiting targets for the year just yet, chief says**
(22 Jan) Army Times, By Kyle Rempfer
The Army already plans to be over the end-strength projection it was shooting for this fiscal year, so leaders aren't eager to set a new recruiting target until they see how things play out later in the spring, the service's chief of staff said this week.

6. **The Army's new battalion commander selection process is just like the NFL Scouting Combine, service chief says**
(23 Jan) Task & Purpose, By Haley Britzky
If you ask the Army chief, the new Battalion Commander Assessment Program (BCAP) is comparable to the National Football League Combine — and so far, things are going swimmingly.

7. **More sailors are reenlisting. Leaders say it's because Navy culture is changing**
(24 Jan) Military.com, By Gina Harkins
The Navy is moving away from the "suck it up, buttercup"-style culture of the past to appeal to the millennial generation and beyond -- and new retention numbers indicate the approach is likely working.

8. **Why a huge drop in service members becoming citizens has lawmakers worried**
(24 Jan) Military Times, By Meghann Myers
Tens of thousands of troops have earned their citizenship through serving since 2010, but a precipitous drop in those numbers has some lawmakers concerned.

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT
VA-20-0908-B-000053

9. **Army recruiter arrested on allegations of statutory rape**
(27 Jan) Army Times, By Kyle Rempfer
Northeast Alabama law enforcement arrested Army Staff Sgt. William L. Turk, 27, after investigators alleged he had sex with a girl under the age of 16. Turk was suspended from all recruiting duties immediately following his arrest. There is no indication that Turk met the alleged victim through his duties as an Army recruiter.

10. **Marines wanted for service's new advertising campaign**
(27 Jan) Stars & Stripes
The Marine Corps has put out a casting call for active duty and reserve Marines to participate in the service's latest recruiting campaign focused on the boot camp "transformation." Casting sessions will be held in February at two Marine Corps bases on the east and west coasts, the Corps said in an administrative message published Friday.

11. **White House seeks to establish more ROTC programs at HBCUs**
(27 Jan) US News & World Report, By Lauren Camera
The White House Initiative on historically black colleges and universities wants HBCUs to expand Army Reserve Officers' Training Corps programs on their campuses and modernize their degree offerings to ensure students are graduating with the skills necessary to strengthen the U.S. military. "In order to sustain a military capable of defending our country and our allies, we need smart talented men and women of character to serve," said Marshall Williams, principal deputy assistant secretary of Manpower and Reserve Affairs for the Department of the Army.

12. **CEO pens viral post on work-life balance urging others to 'pick family'**
(28 Jan) GMA, By Genevieve Shaw Brown
"I think there's too much fear amongst employees who feel they have to hide their personal lives because, if they don't, their career opportunities will be hampered," Daniel Abrahams told GMA. "This leads to employee unhappiness, regret and resentment. I don't want people to ever feel guilty about making their family a priority. In my opinion, employers who treat their staff like humans and show they care about them on a personal level, will receive more buy-in, loyalty and trust."

EMPLOYMENT & INTEGRATION

13. **The Global Gender Gap Report 2020**
(January 2020) World Economic Forum
None of us will see gender parity in our lifetimes, and nor likely will many of our children. That's the sobering finding of the Global Gender Gap Report 2020, which reveals that gender parity will not be attained for 99.5 years. <<Full Report>>

14. **Study: Men are more emotional than women at work**
(13 Jan) Yahoo Finance, By Kalila Sangster
Men are twice as likely to get emotional because their "ideas weren't heard" or because they "were criticized" and they were almost three times more likely to experience an emotional event because a project went over budget, missed a deadline or got cancelled.

15. **'A long time to wait': Virginia passes Equal Rights Amendment in historic vote**
(15 Jan) The Washington Post, By Gregory S. Schneider, Laura Vozzella and Patricia Sullivan
Both chambers of Virginia's General Assembly passed the Equal Rights Amendment marking a watershed moment in the nearly century-long effort to add protections for women to the U.S. Constitution.

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT
VA-20-0908-B-000054

16. **Pentagon to talk Space Force plans, uniforms with Trump**
(15 Jan) Roll Call, By John M. Donnelly
Officials expected to brief president on plans for starting up newly authorized military service branch. Besides being prepared to show Trump the logo ideas, the military leaders will be ready to talk about the subject of uniforms and to describe proposed rank structures and organizational charts, according to the Pentagon official.

17. **The U.S. Space Force is not a joke**
(15 Jan) The Atlantic, By Marina Koren
Trump has pushed for the creation of the Space Force since the spring of 2018. But the version that became law isn't exactly the one he might have in mind. Yes, the law, part of a larger defense-spending bill, established the Space Force as the sixth branch of the American armed forces, but it is not the stand-alone organization that Trump seemed to have promised, a "separate but equal" entity alongside the Air Force—a problematic framing for different reasons—the branch historically responsible for defending the country's space interests.

18. **POLL: What should members of Space Force be called?**
(15 Jan) Military Times, By J. D. Simkins
Space Force officials will mull over the aforementioned strategies, as well as plans for a training regimen and personnel rank structure, over the next 18 months. That same period could also yield a rebranding of space-centric Air Force bases such as Vandenberg and Shriever.

19. **Women running for president are raising more money from women than are their male opponents**
(15 Jan) The Washington Post, By Michelle Ye Hee Lee and Anu Narayanswamy
Despite questions of electability, female donors are showing enthusiasm for female presidential candidates.

20. **Pope names 1st woman to Vatican's top management position**
(15 Jan) The Associated Press
Pope Francis has tapped an Italian lawyer to be the first woman to hold a management position in the Vatican's most important office, the Secretariat of State.

21. **The Giants just hired Alyssa Nakken—as the first full-time female coach in MLB history**
(17 Jan) CNBC, By Courtney Connley
Former Sacramento State softball star Alyssa Nakken is making Major League Baseball history by becoming the first full-time female coach in the league.

22. **US Space Command has passed first combat test, officials say**
(20 Jan) Military.com, By Richard Sisk
The newly created U.S. combatant command focused on space has passed its initial combat test, according to officials and experts. Early warning capabilities belonging to the command helped detect recent Iranian ballistic missile launches at U.S. bases in Iraq, contributing to an early warning advantage for troops on the ground.

23. **49ers' Katie Sowers to Become 1st Woman in NFL History to Coach in a Super Bowl**
(20 Jan) Bleacher Report, By Joseph Zucker
Offensive assistant coach Katie Sowers will be the first woman to coach in a Super Bowl when the Niners face off with the Kansas City Chiefs in Super Bowl LIV on Feb. 2 at Hard Rock Stadium.

24. **Space Development Agency on track to become part of Space Force in 2022, director says**
(21 Jan) Defense News, By Valerie Insinna
The U.S. government's Space Development Agency will officially become part of the Space Force in October 2022, its director told reporters Tuesday.

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT
VA-20-0908-B-000055

25. **These Space Force uniforms look awfully familiar**
(21 Jan) Military Times, By Meghann Myers
For months now, questions have swirled about how the new Space Force will distinguish itself as the sixth branch of the military. There are so many things to sort out: a training base, an education pipeline, rank structure, uniforms, a motto, a song and more.

26. **Here's How Women Will Change the Workplace in 2020**
(22 Jan) Philadelphia Magazine, By Selena Rezvani
Here are my five predictions for the upcoming year: women's voices will be angrier, louder and more forceful; men and women in the workplace will continue to the awkward dance; more women will call out toxic work environments; work cultures will become more transparent (even if they don't want to); and rallying women to 'Lean In' will fade in favor of putting pressure on companies to remove blocks.

27. **Katerina Sakellaropoulou becomes Greece's first woman president**
(22 Jan) CNN World, By Elinda Labropoulou
High court judge and human rights advocate Katerina Sakellaropoulou has been elected Greece's first female president by parliament.

28. **Here it is, the Space Force seal.**
(24 Jan) Military Times, By Meghann Myers
A week after Space Force revealed its uniform via Twitter, President Trump dropped the new military service's logo in the same manner.

29. **NC Senator co-sponsors bill ensuring proper equipment for women in military**
(27 Jan) ABC 15 News, By Sydney Basden
Senator Thom Tillis announced Friday he had co-sponsored legislation to ensure female service members have proper-fitting equipment. The Female Body Armor Modernization Act of 2019 was introduced by Iowa Senator Joni Ernst, and officials say it would help women in the military have adequate and properly-fitted body armor and personal protective equipment.

30. **Army releases ACFT mobile app that calculates scores, personalizes workouts**
(28 Jan) Army Times, By Kyle Rempfer
The Army has updated its Physical Readiness Training, or PRT, mobile app for soldiers preparing to take the new Army Combat Fitness Test this year. The free updated app offers soldiers a collection of exercises, tailors PT programs to their personal needs and allows them to calculate test scores, said Lt. Col. David Feltwell, Center for Initial Military Training physical therapist, in an Army news release.

31. **3 state attorneys general sue to recognize ERA as 28th Amendment**
(30 Jan) USA Today, By Ryan W. Miller
The attorneys general in the most recent three states to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment filed a lawsuit Thursday in an effort for the constitutional amendment to be recognized as the 28th Amendment after missing a congressional deadline. Virginia became the 38th state to ratify the amendment this week after both houses of its Legislature voted to approve the measure. However, the move came long after the U.S. Congress set a deadline for three-fourths of states to do so by 1982.

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT
VA-20-0908-B-000056

WELL-BEING & TREATMENT

32. **I Was Pregnant and in Crisis. All the Doctors and Nurses Saw Was an Incompetent Black Woman**
(8 Jan) Time, By Tressie Mcmillan Cottom
In the wealthiest nation in the world, black women are dying in childbirth at rates comparable to those in poorer, colonized nations. The CDC says that black women are 243 percent more likely to die from pregnancy or childbirth-related causes than are white women.

33. **Soldier appeals sex crime conviction, says jury was likely to be confused by SHARP testimony**
(14 Jan) Stars & Stripes, By Nancy Montgomery
The Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces will hold a hearing to decide whether Pvt. Tyler Washington's conviction for abusive sexual contact, confinement for 30 days and bad conduct discharge were fair. Capt. Zachary Gray, Washington's lawyer, stated that although the female Soldier asked Washington to stop, he "would not have been able to understand her because her voice was muffled by his hand."

34. **These military towns have the highest rates of sexually transmitted diseases in the country**
(15 Jan) Military Times, By Patricia Kime
According to a report released by the Armed Forces Health Surveillance Branch, incidence rates of chlamydia among troops more than doubled from 2013 to 2018, while rates of gonorrhea doubled for men and rose by 33 percent for women.

35. **Senators demand review of Army Reserve sexual assaults**
(16 Jan) The Associated Press, By Todd Richmond
Two Democratic senators demand that Army officials open an investigation into allegations that commanders of an Illinois-based reserve unit mishandled sexual assault complaints and protocols.

36. **Ayanna Pressley Reveals She Has Alopecia In Poignant Video**
(16 Jan) Huff Post, By Jamie Feldman
"I want to be free of the secret and the shame," the Massachusetts representative said, showing her bald head for the first time.

37. **Facing accusations of sexual assault, general says he wants to help victims**
(16 Jan) Military.com, By Oriana Pawlyk
Faced with a lawsuit alleging he sexually assaulted a subordinate female officer, Air Force Gen. John Hyten, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, strenuously maintains that he is innocent.

38. **New Army program offers financial assistance for child care costs after a PCS move**
(17 Jan) Military Times, By Karen Jowers
Soldiers and their families who move to a new duty station may be eligible for up to $1,500 in financial assistance for child care, under a new program. Army Emergency Relief is launching the program Feb. 1. The assistance will be in the form of grants, no-interest loans or a combination of both. Soldiers may qualify for up to $500 per month per family for three consecutive months.

39. **Bipartisan bill would create sex assault solutions task force for Coast Guard**
(17 Jan) Nexstar Media Group
Two female senators, both of whom are also veterans, are reaching across the aisle to try to create a new task force that would combat sexual assault within the U.S. Coast Guard. Reports of sexual assault within the Coast Guard have risen in recent years, reflecting figures from the military as a whole. In 2018, nearly half of the female cadets at the Coast Guard Academy reported being sexually harassed, and a new investigation found mismanagement of those cases by leadership.

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40. **Is this Navy chief warrant officer a Peeping Tom?**
(21 Jan) Navy Times, By Geoff Ziezulewicz
A Navy chief warrant officer is facing a court-martial trial over allegations that he recorded a woman's "private area" without her consent and then distributed the footage. Prosecutors also accuse Warrant Officer 4 Wade S. Howell of distributing an "intimate image" of an individual that same month "with the intent to humiliate, harm, or harass (the individual), or with reckless disregard that (the individual) would be humiliated or harmed" by the image's distribution, according to the charge sheet.

41. **Fertility Inc.: Inside the big business of babymaking**
(21 Jan) Fortune, By Beth Kowitt
One in eight couples struggles to conceive. No wonder investors are injecting cash into the industry.

42. **Wisconsin DOJ to review National Guard sexual assault investigations**
(22 Jan) The Associated Press
The Wisconsin Department of Justice plans to review a series of sexual assault investigations from the Wisconsin National Guard after a federal report found many were conducted improperly. A report revealed multiple shortcomings in the Wisconsin Guard's sexual misconduct reporting protocols, most notably commanders opening their own internal investigations into complaints rather than referring them to Army or Air Force criminal investigators as required by federal law and Department of Defense policy.

43. **Military wife sentenced in toddler's death wasn't authorized to provide child care in base housing**
(23 Jan) Military Times, By Karen Jowers
A Navy wife has been sentenced to 28 years in prison in connection with the death of a Navy child she was babysitting at her home in privatized housing in Norfolk. The 18-month-old toddler, Amir Melton, was the son of two sailors and died as the result of head injuries. It is the second known death of a military child in the home of an unauthorized child care provider in military housing within the last 15 months.

44. **Photo of negative pregnancy test after '1,200 days of trying' hits home for thousands**
(23 Jan) GMA, By Nicole Pelletiere
A woman who shared a photo of her negative pregnancy test is inspiring others to keep fighting as they try for the baby they've always wanted. Infertility is defined as the inability to become pregnant after one year of having regular sexual intercourse without the use of birth control, according to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. The time span is shortened to six months without becoming pregnant for women age 35 and older. Over 6 million women in America struggle with infertility, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

45. **Women do more grunt work at home, no matter their pay or education**
(23 Jan) CBS News, By Aimee Picchi
The Oxfam and the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) zeroed in on how U.S. women and men spend their time and, in a twist, adjusted for factors such as educational attainment and work status. What researchers found was that working women are also putting in extra shifts at home. The gender gap in unpaid work cuts across income and education, the study found. That imbalance can limit women's ability to advance in their careers, according to the study.

46. **Army probes handling of sex assault complaints in Illinois-based reserve unit**
(24 Jan) The Associated Press, By Todd Richmond
Army officials have quietly ordered an investigation into allegations that leaders of an Illinois-based reserve unit mishandled sexual assault complaints and retaliated against a whistleblower, according to documents obtained by The Associated Press.

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47. **Navy investigating who took secret videos of sailors in a bathroom and posted to porn site**
(24 Jan) NBC News, By Courtney Kube
Investigators believe the videos — found on the website Porn Hub — were taken through a peephole and caught unsuspecting service members undressing. Potential victims are being notified in a coordinated effort by NCIS, command leadership, and Victim's Legal Counsel. The website hosting the videos and images at issue has complied with an NCIS request to remove the videos and images from its site and is cooperating with the ongoing NCIS investigation.

48. **Trump administration 'rolling back women's rights by 50 years' by changing definitions of domestic violence and sexual assault**
(24 Jan) Independent, By Maya Oppenheim
The Trump administration quietly changed the definition of both domestic violence and sexual assault back in April but the move has only just surfaced. The change could have significant repercussions for millions of victims of gender-based violence. "Narrowing the definition will stop victims being able to access the services they need" said Holly Taylor-Dunn, a senior lecturer at the University of Worcester who has been working in the field of domestic and sexual violence for 17 years.

49. **An Arizona woman can't use her frozen embryos after divorce, state Supreme Court rules**
(27 Jan) CNN Health, By Dakin And one
Ruby Torres had her eggs fertilized before undergoing cancer treatment in 2014, court documents say. At the time, she and her then-boyfriend, John Joseph Terrell, signed an agreement at the fertility clinic that said if they split up the embryos could either be donated to another couple or used by one of them to have children -- but only with the "express, written consent of both parties."

50. **Maternity leave: US policy is worst on list of the world's richest countries**
(27 Jan) The Guardian, By Miranda Bryant
According to a 2019 report by Unicef, which analysed which of the world's richest countries are most family friendly. At the bottom of the table was the United States – which, with a grand total of zero weeks, was the only country in the analysis that offered absolutely no national paid leave.

51. **New Barbie dolls feature vitiligo and hairless models in bid to boost diversity**
(28 Jan) CNN Style, By Rory Sullivan
The maker of Barbie dolls has released new designs to broaden the diversity of its range, including a doll with no hair and one with the skin condition vitiligo. Speaking of the Barbie with no hair, the company said: "If a girl is experiencing hair loss for any reason, she can see herself reflected in the line." Last year, a doll with a prosthetic leg and another with a wheelchair joined the Fashionistas range.

52. **DOD Releases Annual Report on Sexual Harassment and Violence at the Military Service Academies**
(30 Jan) U.S. Department of Defense, Immediate Press Release
Today, the Department released the annual report on sexual harassment and violence at the Military Service Academies. This year's report consists of feedback from program compliance inspections and the 292 cadets, midshipmen, faculty, and staff that participated in focus groups. In addition, the department and military service representatives conducted onsite assessments of academy prevention and response efforts.

53. **Sexual assault reports by cadets, midshipmen at military academies surge by 32%**
(30 Jan) USA Today, By Tom Vanden Brook
Reports of sexual assault by cadets and midshipmen at the nation's military academies jumped 32% during the past school year, reflecting increases in those crimes and a greater willingness to report them, according to a Pentagon report obtained by USA TODAY. There were 122 reports of sexual assault during the 2018-19 school year, compared to 92 in 2017-18.

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SERVICEWOMEN IN THE NEWS

54. **Female Army medic who ran through a hail of bullets to save 5 men in burning Humvee earns silver star**
(14 Jan) The Epoch Times, By Robert Jay Watson
Spc. Monica Lin Brown is the first woman to receive the honor after Sgt. Leigh Ann Hester in 2005 and the second to receive the medal since WWII.

55. **WNBA Tentative Agreement Bumps Average Player Salary to $130,000, Includes Maternity Leave**
(14 Jan) NBC 4 Washington, By Doug Feinberg
The contract, which begins this season and runs through 2027, will pay players an average of $130,000 and guarantees full salaries while on maternity leave. The collective bargaining agreement also provides enhanced family benefits, travel standards and other health and wellness improvements.

56. **Face of Defense: To the Moon … And Beyond!**
(16 Jan) Explore: Stories from around the Defense Department, By Katie Lange
Marine Corps Maj. Jasmin Moghbeli isn't the first female active-duty Marine officer to pass the NASA astronaut training program, but her recent graduation means she's on the short list to be the first woman to go to the moon.

57. **Navy cryptologists urge service to name destroyer after Shannon Kent, the Navy cryptologist killed in Syria**
(23 Jan) Military Times, By Diana Stancy Correll
A group of Navy cryptologists is urging the Navy to name a destroyer after Senior Chief Cryptologic Technician (Interpretive) Shannon Kent, who was killed Jan. 16, 2019 in Syria. "Shannon was killed in action on her 5th combat deployment with Special Operations serving at the tip of the spear hunting the enemy," Kent's husband Joe, a retired Green Beret, stated. "This makes her one of the most elite females to make the ultimate sacrifice for our Nation. Naming a destroyer after her would be very fitting of her fighting spirit."

58. **A woman was told to cover up at Chick-fil-A while nursing. To support her, moms held a breastfeeding sit-in**
(23 Jan) CNN, By Christina Zdanowicz
Samantha McIntosh was breastfeeding her 7-month-old daughter at a Chick-fil-A in Georgia, when she was approached by a store manager. The 24-year-old mother's Facebook post ignited a heated conversation around breastfeeding in public. More than 2,000 people commented on the post, many of them mothers coming to McIntosh's defense, while others insisted that feeding a baby in public was not something they wanted to see.

59. **War veteran turned Paralympian hoping to make Tokyo 2020 podium**
(23 Jan) Kyodo News
Melissa Stockwell, a former U.S. Army officer and two-time Paralympian, continues to share her inspiring story in which she lost most of her left leg to a roadside bomb in the Iraq War at the age of 24 but remains optimistic about her future. After competing in swimming at the Beijing Paralympics in 2008, Stockwell switched to triathlon and won bronze at Rio 2016. And now, the mother of two is hoping the 2020 podium will become part of her story of service and triumph over difficulty.

60. **Pat Locke, One of the First Female Cadets at West Point**
(24 Jan) YouTube, By The Heritage Foundation
Retired Army Major Pat Locke shares her inspirational story of becoming one of the first female cadets accepted into the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and the first ever black woman to graduate from West Point by order of merit. Locke, who grew up in extreme poverty, succeeded despite all the challenges life threw at her and, through sheer determination, became the first member of her family to go to college—a value that she continues to impart to young men and women pursuing an education.

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61. **Newport News mourns dead police officer, Navy reservist**
(25 Jan) The Associated Press, By Ben Finley
Katie Thyne served in the Navy before joining the Newport News Police Department, Newport News Police Chief Steve Drew said. She remained in the Navy Reserve. Thyne leaves behind a 2-year-old daughter.

62. **Woman makes history in the Virginia Army National Guard infantry**
(26 Jan) Army Times, By J. D. Simkins
Ana-Alicia Bennett made history last month when she became the first woman to enlist under the 11B "Infantryman" MOS designation in the ranks of the Virginia Army National Guard.

63. **Did this Navy chief deploy her security team without magazines for their weapons?**
(29 Jan) Navy Times, By Goeff Ziezulewicz
A Navy chief is facing court-martial over allegations that her ship security team deployed without magazines for their firearms. Chief Master at Arms Nicolasa R. Simmons, of the San Diego-based Coastal Riverine Squadron 3, is also charged with obstruction of justice for impeding a probe into the 2018 incident by telling her watchstanders "not to report that the unit was not equipped with M4 and M9 magazines" while underway on board the fast transport Carson City, according to charge sheets.

64. **Chief convicted in body lotion shoplifting case**
(29 Jan) Navy Times, By Geoff Ziezulewicz
A Florida-based Navy chief was convicted for stealing a bottle of Versace body lotion from the Navy Exchange at Naval Air Station Jacksonville. At a judge-only court-martial, Chief Boatswain's Mate Kathy M. Tonnah was found guilty of larceny of non-government property worth less than $1,000, according to trial records.

WOMEN VETERANS

65. **WWII Navy Veteran celebrates 100th birthday**
(11 Jan) Fox 4 News, By Digital Team
Carol McGee, a U.S. Navy veteran of the Second World War, celebrated her 100th birthday. McGee enlisted in the U.S. Armed Forces as a Navy nurse in 1942 after graduating from Nursing School.

66. **Photo shoot designed to highlight women veterans**
(15 Jan) WISHTV.COM8, By Aleah Hordges
"I Am Not Invisible," started by the U.S Department of Veteran Affairs, is a unique campaign to increase the visibility of women veterans across the state. Up to 100 local women came to Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 1587 to take part in a photo shoot with a professional photographer.

67. **VA, lawmakers trade barbs after sexual assault claim from congressional staffer**
(16 Jan) Military Times, By Leo Shane III
Top Veterans Affairs officials are criticizing a key congressional staffer for reporting an "unsubstantiated" sexual assault incident at a VA medical center, saying the accusation could discourage public trust in the institution. But congressional leaders say VA leadership are the ones undermining faith in the institution, by attacking a victim instead of working to make their facilities accountable and safe for women veterans.

68. **Female veterans face separate struggles than their male counterparts**
(19 Jan) ABC 7 Denver, By Alicia Nieves
A board game created by graduate students is providing insight into the veteran life experience, particularly the female veteran experience. In the "Military Game of Life," when you are a character and you roll the dice, you eventually land on an "XP" space. "XP" allows you to pick up an experience card, relative to the gender of your character. You learn, through the cards, some experiences are the same for male and female service members, but some are not.

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69. **VA leader must demonstrate commitment to ending harassment**
(21 Jan) The Hill, By Kayla Williams
Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Secretary Robert Wilkie sent a letter to the Chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, with an update on the department's response to staffer Andrea Goldstein's allegation of being sexually assaulted. Wilkie wrote that the matter has been closed with no charges filed. The letter stated that "VA is a safe place for all Veterans to enter and receive care and services" and further called Ms. Goldstein's claims "unsubstantiated." This letter is a breathtakingly inappropriate response to a well-documented concern within the VA medical system.

70. **Top VA hospital lacked full-time gynecologist, facilities serving women veterans for years, report says**
(24 Jan) Military Times, By Leo Shane III
One of the largest veterans medical centers in the country went almost two years without a full-time gynecologist and lacked private, secure spaces for women patients for even longer, according to a new report released by the Veterans Affairs Inspector General this week. "The lack of space, privacy, and provider shortages are widespread, and these problems result in inconsistent, inadequate, and insufficient care for our women veterans," said Rep. Julia Brownley, D-Calf. and chair of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee's task force on women veterans. "We owe all of our veterans the highest quality care. As this report points out, when it comes to equity for women veterans, we're clearly falling short."

71. **Arizona's longest-living veteran dies at age 105**
(26 Jan) The Associated Press
Navajo Nation officials say a 105-year-old woman who served in World War II and was Arizona's longest-living veteran has died. They say Sophie Yazzie died Saturday in Tucson. Yazzie, who was born in 1914 in the Arizona town of Canyon de Chelly, enlisted with the U.S. Army Air Corps at age 28 and served until she was honorably discharged.

72. **VA holds expo for women veterans in Pensacola**
(27 Jan) ABC 3 WEARTV, By Auriette Lindsey
The Gulf Coast Veterans Healthcare System (GCVHCS) is hosting a night out for female veterans. "It's Your Night to Shine" is a three-hour event designed to showcase services available to women. It will be held at the VA clinic in Pensacola on January 31st. Women who served in any era are encouraged to attend.

73. **VA must address the needs of women veterans**
(28 Jan) The Hill, By Jeremy Butler
The face of America's military has changed and, as we start another decade with continued U.S. military engagement around the world, the Department of Veterans Affairs must also adjust to ensure our increasing numbers of women veterans get the care they need. In 2019, the House of Representatives passed the Deborah Sampson Act.

UPCOMING EVENT

74. **Brigadier General Wilma Vaught's 90th Birthday Celebration**
Location: Women In Military Service For America Memorial (located at the gateway to Arlington National Cemetery)
Date/Time: 14 March 2020 from 1300-1600
Attire: Business Casual / Duty Uniform
RVSP: Click on the Eventbrite hyperlink in title above; respond NLT 7 March. Questions call: (703) 533-1155 Ext. 109.
Description: Join us in celebrating the 90th birthday of Brig Gen (Ret.) Vaught, USAF. As the founding president of the Women In Military Service For America Memorial (WIMSA) Foundation, Brig. Gen. Vaught spearheaded the campaign to raise funds and to build the WIMSA, the nation's only major memorial to tell the story of women's service. <<Bio Link>>
Directions: Arrive early to allow time for parking, security through Arlington National Cemetery's Welcome Center, and check-in. Note: A picture ID is required for all visitors, 16 years and older.

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT
VA-20-0908-B-000062

From: Powers, Pamela
Sent: Mon, 9 Mar 2020 17:21:30 +0000
To: Tucker, Brooks;Hudson, William A. (OGC)
Cc: Syrek, Christopher D. (Chris);Cashour, Curtis;Mashburn, John K.
Subject: RE: [EXTERNAL] RE: Invitation to Testify: March 30 Full Committee Hearing

Copy. Need to determine who will go with him.

Pamela Powers
VA Chief of Staff

From: Tucker, Brooks <(b)(6) va.gov>
Date: Monday, Mar 09, 2020, 1:18 PM
To: Powers, Pamela (b)(6) @va.gov>, Hudson, William A. (OGC) <(b)(6) va.gov>
Cc: Syrek, Christopher D. (Chris) <(b)(6) @va.gov>, Cashour, Curtis <(b)(6) va.gov>, Mashburn, John K. (b)(6) va.gov>
Subject: FW: [EXTERNAL] RE: Invitation to Testify: March 30 Full Committee Hearing

FYI

Sent with BlackBerry Work
(www.blackberry.com)

From: (b)(6) @mail.house.gov>
Date: Monday, Mar 09, 2020, 1:05 PM
To: Tucker, Brooks <(b)(6) @va.gov>, Johnson, Glenn (b)(6) @va.gov>
Cc: (b)(6) @mail.house.gov>, (b)(6) @mail.house.gov>, (b)(6) @mail.house.gov>, (b)(6) @mail.house.gov>, (b)(6) @mail.house.gov>, (b)(6) mail.house.gov>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] RE: Invitation to Testify: March 30 Full Committee Hearing

Good Afternoon:

Attached is an invitation for Secretary Robert Wilkie, to testify before the Committee on Veterans' Affairs hearing entitled, " Safety for All: Ending Sexual Harassment and Assault in the Department of Veterans Affairs."

This hearing will be held on Monday, March 30, 2020, at 7:30 p.m., in HVC-210.

Please confirm receipt of this email.

Thank you,
(b)(6)

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

(b)(6)

Chief Clerk
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
B234 Longworth House Office Building
Office: (202) 225-(b)(6)



AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

From: RLW
Sent: Mon, 9 Mar 2020 19:41:25 +0000
To: RLW
Subject: HEARING - Safety for All: Ending Sexual Harassment and Assault in the Department of Veterans Affairs

Background:
On Monday, March 30, 2020, at7:30 p.m., in room 210 of the House Visitors Center, the Committee on Veterans' Affairs will meet in an open session to conduct a full- committee oversight hearing entitled, *"Safety for All: Ending Sexual Harassment and Assault in the Department of Veterans Affairs."* This hearing is an opportunity to discuss the prevalence of sexual and gender harassment, and sexual assault throughout the Department of Veterans Affairs. This hearing will include discussions of efforts taking place within the Department of Veterans Affairs, veteran service organizations (VSOs), and community-based organizations to create a safe and welcoming environment for all.

VA Witnesses:
Secretary Robert L. Wilkie, SECVA
Mr. Dan Sitterly, A/S HRA/OSP
Dr. Patricia Hayes,

Non-VA Witnesses:
TBD

Timeline:
2:00-3:00 PM Final Prep
6:55 PM – Meet at VACO Lobby
7:00 PM – Depart VACO for HVC-210
7:30-9:30 PM – Full Committee Hearing: "Safety for All: Ending Sexual Harassment and Assault in the Department of Veterans' Affairs"
9:45 PM – Depart HVC
10:00/10:15 PM – Arrive VACO

Notes:
Hill Visits:
Chairman Mark Takano, (D-CA) – TBD (Cannon 420)
Ranking Member Phil Roe, (R-TN) – TBD (Cannon 102)

Transportation:
Transportation coordinated with OSVA and requested for additional witnesses and OCLA.

Attachments:
1. Hearing Invite
2. Hearing Prep Calendar
3. Committee Bios (will be added)

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

Good morning, VHA, OGC, and ExecSec –

OCLA received a full-committee hearing invite from the House Veterans Affairs' Committee (HVAC) entitled *"Safety for All: Ending Sexual Harassment and Assault in the Department of Veterans Affairs."* This hearing is scheduled for 03/30/2019 at 7:30PM, HVC RM 210. Appropriate witnesses must be identified/confirmed for SecVA/OCLA clearance NLT 2pm March 11. Testimony must clear the Dept. **NLT 3pm March 18.**

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