

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 15, 2015

The Honorable Linda A. Halliday
Deputy Inspector General
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Office of the Inspector General (50)
810 Vermont Avenue Northwest
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Deputy Inspector General Halliday:

It has come to my attention through a statement made on August 17, 2015 from the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) Deputy Inspector General regarding a VA-OIG Interim Report, titled "Review of Alleged Shredding of Claims-Related Evidence at VA Regional Office, Los Angeles, CA" (Report # 15-04652-448) that veterans' disability claims were deliberately and wrongfully shredded by VA employees despite existing policies prohibiting such practice.

The VA Inspector General discovered that nine documents related to veterans' claims were discarded into shredding bins at the Los Angeles VA Regional Office. Additionally, five of the documents had missing signatures from both an employee and a supervisor, and none of the claims were processed digitally. The report attributes this wrongdoing to lack of training for Support Services Division (SSD) staff, who took over the duties for the Records Management Officer (RMO) position without training in regards to "maintaining, reviewing, protecting, and appropriately destroying veterans' and other Governmental paper records."

Inadequate or improper training of VA employees is inexcusable. I am concerned that this callous destruction of documentation is not unique to the SSD staff at the Los Angeles VA Regional Office, but part of a larger cultural problem at the VA. It is my understanding that in response to the above situation, the VA-OIG has begun an investigation to determine if such practices are widespread at the VA. It is stated in the interim report that the VA-OIG initiated "surprise inspections" at 10 sites beginning on July 20, 2015; more specifically:

"The OIG team gathered and reviewed documents from shred bins, which are the last repository for documents prior to destruction. Our preliminary findings indicate that inappropriate shredding is also occurring at other VAROs and controls generally appear too weak to adequately protect against inappropriate shredding."

Within my jurisdiction, the VA Regional Office in St. Petersburg, FL was included for inspection. I respectfully request you keep my staff informed of the ongoing investigation and that a copy of the final report be sent to my office as soon as possible. It is of my deepest concerns to see that the VA improves to better serve our veterans. I appreciate your consideration of my request.

Sincerely,



Marco Rubio
United States Senator