

Veterans Affairs Whistleblower Coalition

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The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton
United States Senate
476 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-3203

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Dear Ms. Clinton,

This letter is a final attempt to garner meaningful support from you to correct misdeeds that have occurred at the Stratton VA Hospital for over a decade. Over the years we have disclosed several serious matters to your offices in Albany N.Y., New York City N.Y., and Washington D.C. Mr. Albert of your D.C. office assured us in April 2005 that you had personal knowledge of our concerns.

All previous documentation is available to you upon request, as is documentation of wrongdoing at Stratton. We have a number of concerns. As you know, Mr. Paul Kornak was recently sentenced to 6 years in prison as a result of a 48- count manslaughter charge for violations conducting research on veterans at the Stratton center. We made it clear to your offices that although we believe Mr. Kornak should have received maximum punishment for killing patients, falsifying documents and practicing medicine without a license, he was simply being used as a scapegoat for a much larger problem. Among our concerns are previous research violations, which surely predated Dr. James Holland and Mr. Kornak. Until an investigation is performed we have no way of knowing the extent of criminal activity in unauthorized experimentation on veterans, illegal diversion of money, and administrative abuse of personnel.

Additionally, administrators and licensed professionals that spent a decade retaliating against employees attempting to bring the abuses of Kornak and others to light, should be held to account for their actions. These people are far more dangerous than a dozen Kornaks, since they have taken up various posts across the country and threaten to undermine accountability at a number of VA institutions. To put it bluntly, the actions of these people caused the deaths of veterans, and there seems to be few people interested in discovering the truth and preventing a repeat of the Stratton catastrophe. We will be happy to provide you with the names of all suspected persons involved in wrongdoing, their current locations, and their professional licenses and current positions within the Department of Veterans Affairs.

We provided your office with various documents, many of which included correspondence to Leonard Sitek (Democratic Staff Director, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations for the Department of Veterans Affairs), Arthur Wu (Republican Staff Director, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations for the Department of Veterans Affairs), and Congressman Michael McNulty. We also provided Ms. Tracey Brooks of your Albany office with a printed slide summary of research violations and a chronological list of retaliatory activities against several VA employees who had enough respect for veterans and the ethical standards of their professions to speak out on patient abuse issues unrelated to cancer research. We have supportive documentation in the form of patient records, many of which have been filed with several VA-OIG offices, the Albany FBI field office, US Attorney, OSC, and MSPB. The nature of these matters are such that they require intervention by Congress to further efforts at a comprehensive, and much needed, investigation of systemic misbehavior in the VA.

The following is a summary list of immediate concerns. Each day that ticks by without action is another day that puts veterans needlessly in danger.

- The lapses and malfeasance of the Stratton facility at Albany are surely only the tip of the iceberg. While Stratton was especially egregious in violating veterans' rights and compromising the safety of patients, these practices exist throughout the VA system. The extent of this abuse calls for immediate investigation and remediation.
- Investigations of unauthorized experimentation, malfeasance in health care provision, and medical corruption are difficult and expensive to investigate. The FBI and other agencies tasked with investigative responsibilities seem unprepared for investigations in the settings presented by VA and are reluctant to start investigations; perhaps out of fear of what may be found, perhaps because of reticence to attack another government agency, or perhaps because the victims of these crimes are poor and sick and have few resources at their disposal. The FBI needs to be prompted to develop an investigative protocol for the VA and to remember that the people being harmed are those who risked their lives to keep this country free.
- The Stratton VA should be investigated thoroughly for past and current abuses. There are two reasons to do this. First, obviously, to find out the truth and determine the extent of criminal activity. Second, the events at Stratton constitute a sort of "national laboratory" for VA misbehavior and provide a model that investigative techniques and protocols may be built around.
- Public congressional hearings should be convened to determine the prevalence nationwide of activities similar to those discovered at Stratton.
- Congressional referral to the Federal Court of Claims to determine the facts of the retaliation against Anthony Mariano and Jeffrey Fudin and what remedies, if any, should be available for their disclosure of wrongdoing.

Because of the breadth of this problem, we have engaged other Veterans Affairs whistleblowers by forming a national Veterans Affairs Whistleblower Coalition. The coalition consists of Veterans Affairs employees (past or present) who agree to actively lobby Congress to end government retaliation against those who expose veteran patient harm and abuse and major ethical breaches. We have partnered with our colleagues of the National Security Whistleblowers Coalition, all of whom share our position and concerns for veterans and the system which was put in place to care for them.

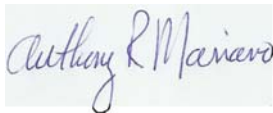
It is time for a meaningful and effective response to come from your office.

Respectfully submitted,

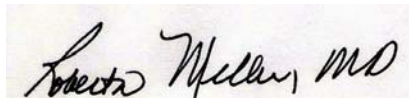


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