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If Veterans don't help Veterans, who will?

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Senator Bernie Sanders

Former Chairman Committee on Veterans Affairs
U.S. Senate
332 Dirksen Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

December 23, 2014

SUBJECT: VETERANS AFFAIRS

Senator Sanders,

Thank you for your response letter dated December 11, 2014.

You mentioned keeping my ideas and suggestions in mind as you deal with Veterans Issues. We need much more than that.

It will take a complete out of the box thinking and actions by you and the entire congress to put integrity back in the system; or do away with this corrupt system.

It will also take more than just changing the Captain on this Titanic of a Federal Agency.

More taxpayer money in the billions is not the answer either.

I for one appreciate your passion for supporting Veterans. I even heard you on FOX News some years ago when you were still a congressman clearly stating that "people did not know how horrible the government treats its Veterans." Of course Mr. "know it all," Bill O'Reilly, said oh that is not true and went on to something else. You spoke the truth then and nothing has changed. It has only gotten worse.

Where I disagree with you is the method you and the rest of congress think that Veterans and Widows support is needed.

As a Veteran myself who has gone through not only the Veterans Affairs gauntlets but the government collusion as well, worked the issues on presumptive disorders for two decades and supported my guys and my Marines and their widows I think I have earned that right to disagree and make recommendations that make sense. My passion for stopping this Veteran and their Widows government abuse is equal to any congressman or senators passion for letting it continue.

Arrogant of me but I would like to think my article on this lame CBO report requested by Congressman Michaud had something to do with his unseating.

<http://www.2ndbattalion94thartillery.com/Chas/CBOBS.htm>

"Before the review: I do not know what Congressional Representative Mike Michaud of Maine, the minority leader on the House Veterans Affairs Committee, was doing nor what was in his mind in requesting this so-called CBO analysis. I would say it would be wise for Veterans, Widows, and friends of Veterans in Maine to watch this guy like a hawk sizing up a field mouse and see what he is actually up to."

I will be communicating to you and other members of Congress and posting a series of issues and recommendations on the internet for fixing this run away Federal Agency. Not only fixing the issues for Veterans and Widows alike but saving the American taxpayer "billions of dollars every year."

Now will it do any good? I doubt it. I just want the world to know with evidence how disgusting this government can be towards its Veterans that supposedly "earned government benefits" for that service to the country.

More than that it might allow the United States Veteran and government created Widows their constitutional legal rights back and freedom from government documented fraud, conspiracy and collusion with no legal redress.

The Veterans' Service Organizations (VSO's) do not represent the majority of Veterans and Widows. Why the Congress continues with this myth and gives them this power is just mind-boggling considering the vested interests they themselves have in keeping Veterans Affairs "as is" and in concert with Veterans Affairs propaganda.

You heard this very same thing in 2000 by under oath testimony when discussing Veterans and Widows outreach. You also heard it was nonexistent then and I will tell you now is still is nonexistent on purpose. Another national shame that is inexcusable.

When I was in DC speaking to a group of congressmen and Veterans Affairs officials I was asked; "You do not like this system do you?" My reply was; "There is not much to like when it requires and mandates the highest form of integrity and there is none."

I was then told by a Veterans Affairs official that this so-called system was what the Veteran Service Organizations wanted.

My reply was: "If this is what the Veteran Service Organizations wanted for Veterans then this is exactly what Veterans Affairs wanted in total."

If VSO's actually represented Veterans and Widows, as you in the Congress have given them that status, with the scientific evidence and data available just in my Era of Herbicide Issues we would have at least 35 presumptive disorders, other geographical locations would indeed be also considered as presumptive, blue water and C-123 service men would also be included; as well as effective dates would be greatly expanded for some areas that were lied about.

Senator Sanders there is only one thing that can trump scientific facts, actual evidence, and even the government's own facts at the given time and that is government collusion.

I personally know you know of many issues that are still unresolved in just a single segment of the issues. I read the transcripts of the 2000 Ranch Hand meeting and could tell the total disgust in your questions and at the answers you as a sitting Congressman were receiving. It was not pretty now was it!

After the dance around yourself, Congressman Shays and Congressman Evans received from not only Veterans Affairs (VA) but the Institute of Medicine (IOM) as well had I been a sitting Congressman at that meeting I would have said something like this:

“...*Congress authorized a 25 year study at a cost of over \$140 million taxpayer dollars to determine health care decisions for this government’s created death and disability to our military. Now I am hearing we are no further along than we were two decades ago. Charges and examples given of White House interference, charges and examples of not giving the damaged Veterans a “fair assessment of their health status” in many issues still not presumptive, charges and examples given of scientific misconduct, charges and examples given of mandated White House protocol violations and an IOM that has been supposedly making recommendations for presumptive disorders for over a decade now and cannot or will not even tell us at what level of certainty they can be or anyone can be for that matter given the environmental issues and varying exposure factors. Then someone had better start telling me what is going on or no one is leaving or I am going to start subpoenas out in all corners to find out what in the world is going on. Our government damaged Veterans and their created Widows deserve better and I am demanding better.

{*When the study was transferred to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) congress itself did not fund the study for three long years while the study marked time and scientists did not meet to review even the studies government redacted data. Of course more of “your Veterans died or became disabled” with no service connection.}

The anti-vets at Veterans Affairs have turned this so called savior of an automated system in to a “Denial Bot”. Their numbers look good at handling claims per some calendar inclusive dates. As you know numbers lie as to what they actually mean in context when given out by Veterans Affairs. Just as Veterans Affairs numbers have meant in the past; nothing but lies. You know that as fact. Liars lie and numbers lie just as they have both in Veterans Benefits as well as recently exposed national shame of Veterans Medical.

What will happen now is a huge log jam at the Board of Veterans Appeal. It will continue to process appeals at the same pace. That means the backlog will grow from two years or longer (what it is now) to five or six years or even longer to even get in the door for a simple hearing. Even now it is entirely unacceptable due to the fraud at Veterans Affairs forcing Board of Veterans Appeals claims as well as the lack of integrity approach by the Board of Veterans Appeals. Many of these claims based on facts should be approved immediately. Much less the simply insane processes the Board of Veterans Appeals is using to deny or approve claims.

Giving the benefit of doubt let’s assume the Board of Veterans Appeals backlog goes to only four years to get to a hearing. Then the Board of Veterans Appeals remands the claim back to Veterans Affairs with that bogus mandate that the remanded claim “must be handled in an expeditious manner” by Veterans Affairs. Of course this entire backlog to the Board of Veterans Appeals is actually created by anti-veteran processes and corruption by Veterans Affairs itself. These denials by Veterans Affairs are not the complex cases that are always used as an excuse. Instead these are claims that should be approved immediately if not for Veterans Affairs Benefits fraud.

Senator Sanders would you consider three or four or five years to work a remanded claim by Veterans Affairs “expeditiously?” Is this the reason why claims for benefits earned are being approved a decade or longer after submittal? Is this the reason why a recent widow’s claim was approved almost a quarter of a century after submittal?

Senator Sanders neither you nor anyone else in congress can justify this as “expeditiously.”

Would it not make more sense to clearly state that if the remand is not addressed within say six to nine months by Veterans Affairs then the Board of Veterans Appeals shall approve the claim as is?

How long would you or any member of congress stand waiting for your “government earned benefits?”

Would you now recommend military service for anyone knowing that the benefits you signed up for, should you survive, will be decades in coming after a draining physical and mental years (maybe even a decade) worth of fighting to obtain those earned benefits?

This BOT system is a death sentence for claims to be approved for my guys, my Marines and my “government created Widows” in a timely manner. A timely manner before they start thinking of ending their own life as they lose everything around them because of government fraud and a set aside legal system that resembles no legal system known at this time in the civilized world.

Maybe all of this is on purpose and I am assuming if that is the case then you and the rest of congress are well aware of it and will do nothing to stop it; in fact condone it. If that is the case the national shame is on all of you in the congress.

I will continue to try to do something as long as I can as I have for over twenty years now.

Meeting after meeting was held on the IRS scandals where their tax status was stalled or denied. No one died from this brazen act of government treason.

Veterans on the other hand have died and even committed suicide or lost everything they had worked for due to that same form of Veterans Affairs scandal that congress will not address.

Delay and deny until the Veteran or Widow just gives up and goes away or dies. Veterans Affairs does not care which comes first as long as their processes and anti-veteran personal accomplish that goal.

My guys and my Marines came home to a nation that despised them. Why? I have no idea since they were only doing what this government demanded of them by law. We could and can live with that. At least some of us could live with those facts.

However; in the denials of what the government actually did and the government collusion and conspiracy to cover up that still goes on today where many did not survive and could not live with that act of government betrayal. A “government created medical information void” even to the treating doctors, researchers and teaching medical hospitals of this nation that had no idea of what was going on inside these Veterans bodies or even their damaged off-spring.

In my unit we had fellows that were 122 mm rocket wounded with shrapnel. These men were evacuated and some of them survived. However if they died six years later from those shrapnel head wounds their name is on the Vietnam Memorial Wall.

Senator Sanders please explain the difference from dying from a physical war wound years later or dying from a government toxic chemical war wound years later. Are we now going to separate physical war wounds from radiation war wounds? In addition are we going to separate toxic chemical war wounds from radiation war wounds? Is not the end result the same? The Veteran died from war wounds physical, chemical or radiation is the end result. Does it matter who was responsible; the enemy or the government itself? I would think congress would have a hard time in a real court of law demonstrating any difference when the Veteran died from wounds, any wounds chemical or radiation, received in military service to this nation.

Mark the date of this letter and if the truth and the real numbers in backlog in context to the end result ever gets out from “behind government closed doors” and Veterans Affairs and Board of Veterans Appeals lies you will find I am exactly correct. I told you so!

My forthcoming mail to you and posted series will include subjects and recommendations from myself and Veterans and Widows that lived and are living this government nightmare of a federal agency, Veterans Affairs; will include:

- The Tragedy in Overview
- Veterans Affairs Medical Issues
- Veterans Affairs Benefit Issues

A couple of more things I want to cover before I close this first letter to you and others.

The Congress can pass all the bills, public laws and statutes it wants. The first thing Veterans Affairs and even the Department of Defense do is figure how they can circumvent those mandates and/or report around what the mandates are supposed to accomplish. The recent Veterans Affairs medical reporting is a perfect example of this travesty. While it has gone out of the media you and the entire congress have to know nothing is fixed.

Senator Sanders what good does it do to pass mandates and massive funding knowing the federal agencies involved are going to drag their feet and lie to you and you do nothing about it? That is not leadership nor is it what you and the others were elected to accomplish.

Now it is being reported, no different from lies of the last Medical Benefits fiasco, in a new report from the U.S. government’s General Accounting Office (GAO) revealed that; “VA (once again) is incorrectly reporting its suicide data and does a poor job of tracking and caring for veterans at risk of suicide who are prescribed antidepressants by VA doctors.”

“Lack of complete, accurate, and consistent data and “poor oversight” can inhibit VA’s ability to identify, evaluate and improve ways to better inform its suicide prevention efforts,” the GAO concluded.

...“poor oversight.” Is that not your and the entire congress’s job to make sure these federal agencies and the executive branch in general are not in a state of anarchy against the citizens of this nation; much less the best citizens of this nation?

...this new bill and additional funding...would ensure VA’s mental health and suicide prevention efforts receive crucial independent, “third-party oversight,” while creating a greater accounting of available services and while fostering an enhanced community approach to delivering veterans suicide prevention and mental health care treatment.

“...crucial independent, “third-party oversight;” what in the world is going on here Senator?

Are we now going to have to pay for another layer of government bureaucratic nightmare third party oversight that also can be manipulated to the point the data is corrupted and useless?

Has the congress in its entirety been reduced to mealy mouth words with no power at all left? Or is this just all political posturing and afraid to speak out or more to the point do anything.

In other words; are we now going to have a "government weasel" watching the "government fox" who is watching the hens in the henhouse? Who are we then going to get to watch the government weasel? What program and more millions of taxpayer dollars come next?

The Veterans Affairs suicide prevention program "already funded" that I have commented on to you many times was and is useless. Under oath you heard from a Veterans Affairs whistle blower that clearly stated even when he gave the names and phone numbers of many Veterans that were, by their own admission, contemplating suicide not one phone call or visit was made. Yes and as reported some of them did take their own life. These are documented facts Senator and should have been investigated to the fullest. Those Veterans Affairs employees within that bogus and well funded program that did not contact these Veterans should have been fired immediately. There can be no excuse for this lack of action.

Yes, Senator Coburn killed this new suicide bill which I understand will be reintroduced to spend even more money on Veterans Affairs.

Senator Coburn who seems to "hate all Veterans anyway" and what they stand for stated: "I object to this bill not because I don't want to help save suicide, but because I don't think it will do the first thing to change what has happened." ...the bill "throws money" at the VA and would not solve the veteran suicide problem."

As you probably guess; I agree with Senator Coburn in this issue at least in part. . Money and more and more bureaucratic layers in oversight that can also be corrupted with no ramifications by congress is not the answer.

However, I disagree with his methodology.

In my working career if I had a problem with the company or processes or methodology yes I complained but I always had a recommendation to fix the problems. Otherwise just shut-up!

If Senator Coburn had made those statements and then made sound common sense recommendations to fix the problem I think he was right on spot. Since he just threw darts at the dart board in total arrogance only with no recommendations I find his arrogance and Veterans hostility despicable and deplorable.

When I first started my campaign for some semblance of justice for my guys and my Marines and my Widows from the government I worked with Congressman Lane Evans (rest in peace). In my opinion he has been one of the only true Veterans Champions in the entire congress over the last forty years. There have been a few others along the way from time to time but none as aggressive as Congressman Evans. I at one time approached him to run for president. Unfortunately he replied that he was ill and was going to have to resign.

At that time on my reported issues he assigned a congressional investigator from his staff to research the issues. Nice fellow and he did his job. I am assuming that the executive branch and the present attorney general has not outlawed congressional investigators as of yet. That however is an assumption on my part.

The recommendation must be in this single discrete issue of suicides which is nothing sort of deplorable that a commission be created to investigate Veterans Affairs and their already funded suicide prevention program. This would make sense if the composite commission was congressional investigators from the senate and house Committee on Veterans' Affairs; both parties. The commission would report only to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs on both sides; no one else. If they do not already have subpoena authority then give them such authority.

Anyone within Veterans Affairs caught lying or trying to mislead the congressional investigators should be fired on the spot.

Issues that should be investigated and found out ASAP:

- Is the present Veterans Affairs suicide program feasible as to its functionality?
- Is the present Veterans Affairs program effective?
- How effective?
- What improvements must be made?
- Is Veterans Affairs in compliance with former “under oath testimony” of what Veterans Affairs say they are doing and their reported results. (Obviously from the above they are not since they did not call one Veteran.)
- What is the age group of these suicide Veterans?
- In what Era did these suicide Veterans serve?
- Where these Veterans under Veterans Affairs care for mental disorders?
- Where these Veterans under outside medical care for mental disorders?
- How many of these Veterans had applied for Veterans Affairs care for mental disorders and never received such care due to Veterans Affairs fraudulent reporting?
- How many were under no treatment at all?
- How many had outstanding non-approved service connection claims at Veteran Affairs?
- How many had outstanding non-approved service connection claims at the Board of Veterans Appeals?
- If claims had been submitted how long had the Veteran waited?
- How many appeals had been submitted?

Senator Sanders you and the congress have the opportunity to gather your own facts and data and quit relying on the lying Veterans Affairs and even Department of Defense corrupted data. At twenty-two Veterans a day committing suicide down from thirty a day the data is there. Certainly the sample size is large enough to gather the data and facts and see exactly where the trends are as to possible generic causations.

Then go fix the problem yourself as you were elected to do. No more money to Veterans Affairs and NO the Department of Veterans Affairs is not going to fix these issues.

In a three year period even taking the now lowered twenty two suicides a day number you are talking over twenty four thousand Veterans that have taken their own life. As I recall my military career you are now talking about at least two entire divisions that have taken their own life in three years. How long has it been going on would be the real question. That is out of about five percent of the entire population not the entire population. How obscene is that when you put it in perspective?

No other Veteran Era in history has had this discrete issue. Is there no one in congress that sees the same thing as obvious as it is and wants to find the real facts as to the causations or even possible causations? Is no one in the media the least bit curious or concerned as to why this is taking place right in front of them?

As an educated guess my money is on the fraudulent denied claims by Veterans Affairs and the Board of Veterans Appeals based on government fraud that congress allows to go on is the primary reason and causation of hopelessness for Veterans in terminating his or her own life. If you gather the data you might find I and many others are correct. That Veterans Affairs itself is the primary causation; plus the obvious lack of congressional oversight.

Another issue I will be addressing later is this totally bogus rational that the demand for Veterans Affairs medical care "will increase." The data and the numbers of the present military staffing and going even lower in reductions, Veterans dying off at unprecedented rates (much of it due to government causations), and any improvement in the economy (assuming Obama Care does not destroy full time employment in its entirety as well as employer based health care programs) the demand will be greatly DECREASED.

I will also be comparing Medicare costs to Veterans Affairs cost per individual. Billions of dollars are being wasted each year on this rogue federal agency. To continue to do so makes no sense what-so-ever.

Once Congressman Evans had to resign and of course one of the other passionate advocates Congressman Chris Shays is now out of office only you and a handful of government elected officials seem to give one dime about the way Veterans and Widows are treated by this government. Even some of them must be questionable at this time as to whether it is passion or rhetoric.

It is a shame when study scientists and others speak the truth on our Veterans behalf in any Era issues not only are they government punished but the universities and prestigious study groups they represent are government punished as well. This action does not speak well for a nation that is supposed to have free speech and truth. It sounds more like a government headed up by Adolph Hitler or Joseph Stalin, or any other regime where the government controls what is truth and what is not.

What should happen during the active duty service man or women out-processing to become a Veteran. The government should stamp his or her discharge papers; "You are now a Veteran of the United States and thereby have now been reduced to third class citizen status. Your constitutional rights before you served honorably in the United States Military as to Justice for All have been stricken. Any earned government benefits you honorably served to earn will be waiting for you provide you can maneuver through the many gauntlets the government in its entirety has laid out for you in order to obtain such earned benefits."

Sarcastic I know but more to the truth than this government and our media wants to admit.

The government continues cutting the military to the bone as they always do for more and more social un-earned programs. One has to wonder if the economy had not been so dismal the last decade or longer if even the lower numbers required in our military could have been achieved.

Keep this total abuse of the Veterans population up and when you need a standing military:

A prestigious dioxin study scientists on Ranch Hand and prestigious cancer researcher...

"...this is more than a Veterans Affairs issue. It is, in fact, a national security issue. If the country continues to treat their Veterans poorly and in some cases, abominably as has been the case with the Veterans suffering from adverse health outcomes from Vietnam, from the Persian Gulf, we are not going to meet the recruitment and retention needs in the new era of needing highly educated, highly technical proficient people. They are not going to stay in because why should they. when they know what's going to happen going out the other end?"

Maybe my statement above was not as sarcastic as I thought. If so, at least I consider myself in good company.

I will be waiting on your or any congressman or senator's response. Doubtful it will be coming but I am looking forward to any response. As I am sure the folks on my lists will be as well.

My offer still stands for an informal meeting with myself and a few other very knowledgeable Veterans for discussions of the issues and sound legal common sense recommendations to fix the issues for all Veterans and Widows once and for all.

For once get the real facts from Veterans; not Veterans Affairs or Veteran Service Organizations skewed facts.

Sincerely,

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