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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515–0545

December 17, 2015

The Honorable Loretta Lynch
Attorney General of the United States
Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Madam Attorney General Lynch,

During your testimony before the House Judiciary Committee on November 17, 2015, I asked you a series of questions pertaining to the Department of Justice's (DOJ) investigations of the various scandals plaguing the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). As you may recall, you were unable to provide answers during the hearing; however, you twice committed to have DOJ's Office of Legislative Affairs (OLA) provide those answers to my office.

Subsequently, OLA inquired as to whether it would be acceptable if those answers were provided to my office via an informal phone call, as opposed to the common practice of responding to "Questions for the Record," which are part of the hearing's public record. I agreed to this arrangement under the assumption that OLA's offer was a good-faith effort to provide expedited answers to assist Congress in its oversight role, and with the ultimate goal of serving our veterans.

On December 16, 2015, an informal follow-up phone call took place between OLA, my staff, and staff from the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs. After a month delay, and to my great disappointment, OLA failed to provide any information that would have provided answers to the questions I posed at the hearing. OLA, citing vague "privacy" and "ethical" concerns, repeatedly refused to provide information to additional follow-up questions that did not pertain to specific investigations or individuals. OLA even went so far as to rebuff questions that simply inquired as to the scope of DOJ's activities, such as:

1.) How many referrals did DOJ receive from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) or the VA's Office of Inspector General (OIG)?

2.) How many of those referrals from the FBI or the OIG did DOJ decide not to pursue?

3.) How many VA-related DOJ investigations are currently open?

4.) How many VA-related investigations has DOJ closed?

Clearly, none of these questions pose the threat of violating privacy or ethical matters. However, these questions do seek to ascertain the scope of DOJ's activities and use of taxpayer resources regarding VA-related investigations. Thus, DOJ has disregarded a legitimate function of Congress' constitutional oversight role in refusing to provide basic background information pertaining to DOJ investigations.

Further, I am at a loss as to why OLA required a month to determine that it was unable to provide any answers to these questions. It is my concern that OLA intentionally induced my office to participate in an informal discussion for the sole purpose of obstructing legitimate congressional oversight beyond the public's purview. I am disappointed in the lack of transparency. I am disappointed in the disregard for Congress' constitutional role. Yet, most of all, I am appalled in the knowledge that our veterans continue to suffer while VA and DOJ play partisan games. Veterans fought for our country – it is time for our federal government to fight for our veterans.

Therefore, in an effort to cut through the bureaucratic impediments to improve the VA for our veterans, I respectfully request an in-person meeting with an appropriate DOJ official who has the authority to provide answers to the questions that were asked, as promised during the hearing.

Thank you for your attention to this inquiry.

Sincerely,

Mimi Walters
U.S. Representative

cc: The Honorable Bob Goodlatte, Chairman, House Committee on the Judiciary
The Honorable Jeff Miller, Chairman, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
The Honorable Peter Kadzik, Assistant Attorney General, Department of Justice Office of Legislative Affairs

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