

**STATEMENT OF  
THE HONORABLE JACKIE WALORSKI  
INDIANA'S SECOND DISTRICT  
BEFORE THE  
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**May 16, 2018**

Good morning Chairman Roe, Ranking Member Walz and members of the Committee. I appreciate the opportunity to discuss issues at the Department of Veterans Affairs and ways we can improve accountability and build a healthier culture, so our veterans get the care they earned. There are many highly dedicated staff and leaders at the VA, but bureaucratic obstruction continues to hinder their ability to execute VA's mission. The result is subpar care across the system that we cannot tolerate.

As many of you know, I spent four years on this committee and sat through hearings on some of the worst scandals at the VA. We exposed long wait times in Phoenix, dangerous prescribing practices of a Wisconsin doctor known as the "candy man," mistreatment of a veteran who died of cancer after bureaucratic delays, and countless other incidents across the country. My home state of Indiana has not been immune to such scandals either.

- The DEA raided a medical center after it purchased more powerful and larger quantities of addictive prescription drugs than any other facility in our area;
- A veteran in severe pain with a mental health condition was moved through multiple VA and non-VA facilities without proper treatment. He was discharged, sent home, and two days later he took his own life;

- A veteran was misdiagnosed with muscle spasms when he had cancer that almost killed him;
- A doctor was tapering veterans off their opioid pain medication without a face-to-face meeting or physical assessment;
- An employee was “blind scheduling” to pad their schedule with fake appointments; and
- A podiatrist may have botched over a hundred surgeries.

I have fought with administrative personnel at all levels of the VA to ensure veterans get the care we've promised them. While the facilities that serve veterans in my district have been improving, there is still a long way to go before they are providing continuous high-quality care.

The VA management culture has to be shaken up. The senior leadership is a revolving door, while middle management too often looks the other way at wrongdoing and protects each other at any cost.

The VISNs need to roll up their sleeves and get to work. Sitting in the regional office and waiting for the phone to ring is not enough. An inspection every year is not enough. The VISN managers need to do aggressive oversight of the medical centers and clinics in their boundaries. They are supposed to be the first line of defense against mismanagement, and it just isn't happening.

Hiring, firing, and mobility throughout VA are stagnant, and human resources are overdue for a complete makeover. The Accountability Act is a major accomplishment, but “accountability”

also has to be a principle that the workforce, especially the middle management, actually embraces.

Mr. Chairman, I am proud of this Committee's legislative accomplishments when I served on it, and I commend you for what you are achieving now. But legislation can only take VA part of the way. We all have to get in the trenches in our districts, expect excellence, and demand answers when it is not happening.