

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 21, 2017

The Honorable David Shulkin
Secretary
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Washington DC 20420

Dear Secretary Shulkin:

On December 4, we wrote a letter to you requesting answers regarding hiring practices at the VA. We sent this letter because the VA knowingly hired a neurosurgeon who had his medical license revoked in one state, which goes against VA regulations. We appreciate your responses to our questions and are glad to hear corrective action is being taken. However, we would like you to provide additional clarification regarding your responses.

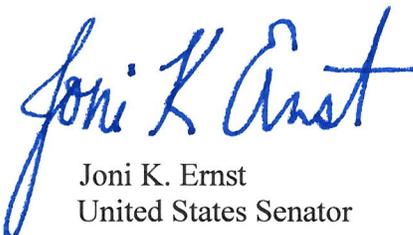
Our first question asked for the “incorrect” guidance given to the Iowa City VA that allowed them to hire the neurosurgeon. In your response, you stated that the Iowa City VA relied on VA Handbook 5005/57. Please provide the page number and section in VA Handbook 5005/57 which “suggested” that the Iowa City VA could hire the neurosurgeon. Additionally, please explain how hospital officials were expected to reconcile the aforementioned section with the information on page 80 which states that “individuals are not eligible for appointment” if their license had been revoked in another state. You also stated that the VA issued new guidance that fully complies with current law, accordingly, please provide a reference to the newly issued guidance.

We also asked what steps the VA is taking to determine how many providers at the Iowa City VA were hired illegally. In your response you stated that the VA has initiated a national review of currently appointed providers to ensure they meet all licensure qualifications. Will the results of the review be made public? Will patients and family members be notified if they received care from a provider who had been hired illegally? In addition, a recent USA Today report found that the VA has been hiring providers illegally since 2002. Will you expand the scope of your national review to examine providers hired from 2002 onwards?

Please respond by January 22, 2018.

Sincerely,


Charles E. Grassley
United States Senator


Joni K. Ernst
United States Senator