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December 13, 2020

The Honorable Carolyn Maloney  
United States House of Representatives  
2308 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable James Comer  
United States House of Representatives  
1037 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Maloney and Ranking Member Comer,

We write to you today to request an oversight hearing in early January to investigate the actions of Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert Wilkie and his associated political appointees at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Last week, the VA Office of the Inspector General (VAOIG) released a report titled, "Senior VA Officials Response to a Veteran's Sexual Assault Allegations." This report was prompted by accusations that the Secretary tried to discredit a female veteran who claimed she was sexually assaulted at the Washington DC VA Medical Center. The VAOIG report came to the conclusion that, "The tone set by Secretary Wilkie was at minimum unprofessional and at worst provided the basis for senior officials to put out information to national reporters to question the credibility and background of the veteran who filed the sexual assault complaint." To the veteran community, this means that the leader of the VA tried to undermine a victim instead of taking a sexual assault complaint seriously. The Secretary betrayed the trust veterans put into the VA. He especially betrayed all of the women that have served our country in the Armed Forces.

Since the VAOIG released their report, all of the big six veteran organizations have called for Secretary Wilkie's removal. These groups include AMVETS, Disabled American Veterans, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Vietnam Veterans of America, and the American Legion. Fifteen members of Congress, including House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, also called for Wilkie's removal. The Department of Veterans Affairs responded to these requests saying Wilkie will "continue to lead the department."

The VAOIG reported that their investigation was hindered by the refusal of several senior VA officials to cooperate with requests for follow-up interviews. Most prominent of those officials who refused to cooperate was the Secretary himself, Mr. Robert Wilkie amongst others. This is why we are asking the House Oversight and Reform Committee to hold a hearing to investigate these claims. Secretary Wilkie and his staff could avoid cooperating with the VAOIG, which unfortunately happens in many of the VAOIG's investigations. We believe this level of unprofessional conduct by a sitting United States Secretary and their staff, along with a blatant refusal to participate with the VAOIG, warrants your Committee's

immediate consideration. Your Committee has the authority to place these witnesses under oath, and to set the tone that actions like this by politically appointed individuals will not be tolerated now or in the future.

Our nation's heroes deserve a system of checks and balances. They deserve a Secretary they have confidence in. A secretary who leads by example and puts veterans before politics. This unacceptable abuse of authority should not be tolerated and we hope that you utilize your full authority to investigate this matter. Doing so will show our women veterans that we have their back, and that this is their VA.

Sincerely,

JAN BROWN  
AMVETS National Commander