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United States Senate

April 20, 2016

Ms. Jennifer S. Gutowski
Acting Director, Southern Arizona VA Health Care System
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
3601 S 6th Avenue
Tucson, AZ 85723

Dear Ms. Gutowski:

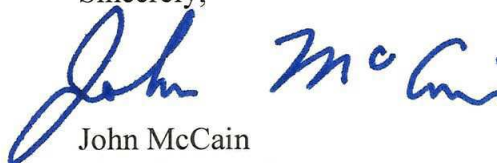
I write regarding several allegations recently brought to my attention that, during the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Office of the Inspector General's (IG) pending investigation of mismanagement at the Southern Arizona VA Health Care System, IG staff have been interviewing whistleblower-employees in the presence of senior managers and other key officials. As you may know, I called for this investigation in February of this year after I learned of potential cases of denied care for veterans, unclean medical facilities and equipment, and whistleblower retaliation.

If true, these allegations would be troubling. The presence of senior managers and other key officials in such interviews discourages candid testimony; will not result in reliable record evidence that will support sound findings of fact, conclusions of law, policy recommendations or adverse administrative action against those found to have done wrong; and will fail to engender confidence in the IG's final report of investigation. For these reasons, I ask you to look into these allegations and determine their veracity. If you find that they are indeed true, I urge you to take the following action:

- 1) Direct management and supervisory staff with the Southern Arizona VA Health Care System to refrain from attending any IG interviews, depositions or debriefings of Southern Arizona VA Health Care System employees during the course of this investigation; and
- 2) Direct IG to re-interview—without supervisory and management staff present—any employee already interviewed in their presence.

In all cases, I ask that you help ensure that employees at the Southern Arizona VA Health Care System are aware of their rights as whistleblower, if they choose to bring to the IG's attention any information regarding waste, fraud or abuse relevant to the IG's pending investigation. I look forward to your timely response to this letter and any actions you have taken in response.

Sincerely,



John McCain
United States Senator

cc: Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert McDonald
Deputy Inspector General of Veterans Affairs Linda Halliday