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August 22, 2013

The Honorable Eric Shinseki
Secretary
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Shinseki,

I am writing today to bring attention to a problem at the Colmery-O'Neil VA Medical Center located in Topeka, Kansas. I have been contacted about a staffing problem at the hospital, specifically in the Emergency Room (ER), which has led to the ER being closed. When this occurs, people are being diverted from the hospital to other area hospitals, complicating their care. In some cases, a closure of this facility would be the difference between life and death.

I have been in contact with the VA hospital directly, and I was told that three doctors leaving simultaneously created "a perfect storm" for staffing problems. I have since been informed the problem is being addressed. However, I am not comfortable with the response I have received for the reason three doctors left. While turnover in any business is to be expected, mass departures are uncommon without extenuating circumstances. I would respectfully request your attention to this matter, and would like a response based on actions that can be taken to resolve this problem both now and in the future. Please do not hesitate to contact me with further questions.

Sincerely,



Lynn Jenkins, CPA
Member of Congress