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**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515-3505**

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The Honorable Eric K. Shinseki  
Secretary  
United States Department of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20420

Dear Secretary Shinseki:

As more troops continue returning home from overseas missions and veterans from previous wars continue to age and require greater care, it is essential that Veterans Affairs (VA) health care is delivered timely and with quality.

The recent tragic situation that occurred at the Phoenix Veterans Affairs Health Care system is appalling and saddening. What is even further disturbing are reports I am personally hearing from veterans, their family members, and doctors about the constant wait times many veterans face for urgent and desperately needed procedures and treatments at VA hospitals. My understanding is that there is nothing preventing the VA from sending a veteran to a private health care provider and that under a number of circumstances, non-VA care can be authorized. These being: 1) when the needed clinical service cannot be provided by a VA facility and the veteran patient cannot be transferred to another VA facility, 2) the VA cannot recruit a needed clinician, 3) a veteran cannot access a VA facility due to geographic inaccessibility, 4) there is an emergency situation where delays in care could result in a life-threatening situation, or 5) to meet patient wait-time standards.

This ill-treatment of veterans and the long wait times at the VA must cease. Our nation's veterans deserve nothing but the highest quality of service and care. Please inform me why the VA does not permit more non-VA care and treatment to veterans in circumstances that warrant it and what the VA plans to do to ensure veterans are properly cared for at all times.

Sincerely,



Robert E. Latta  
Member of Congress