

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 22, 2016

The Honorable Robert McDonald
Secretary
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20420

Dear Secretary McDonald:

We write to express our grave concerns regarding the selection of Dr. Skye McDougall to serve as the Network Director for the South Central Veterans Affairs (VA) Health Care Network (VISN 16). As Network Director, Dr. McDougall would have direct control over the Overton Brooks Medical Center in Shreveport, LA, Alexandria VA Health Care System, and the Southeast Louisiana Veterans Health Care System. As Congressional representatives for the State of Louisiana, we are committed to serving our nation's veterans with the best possible care, and due to Dr. McDougall's history with the VA, we have significant concerns with her ability to meet that high standard.

Numerous reports have confirmed that while testifying at the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs on March 13, 2015, Dr. McDougall definitively lied under oath when she stated the average wait times for new patients at the VA facilities under her supervision in California were about four days. Investigative reports later proved that the average wait times were more than ten times that.

Furthermore, we have concerns with the manner in which Dr. McDougall was selected to lead VISN 16. It has been widely reported that Dr. McDougall was first selected to head up the Southwest Health Care Network (VISN 18), but stiff Congressional and public opposition led to Dr. McDougall being instead appointed to VISN 16.

The Louisiana delegation has written to you in the past to express concerns regarding lack of appropriate leadership within VISN 16. For example, over the last several months, it has been discovered that VISN 16 staff had been contributing to an extreme backlog in emergency medical care claims due to their refusal to process hundreds of thousands of claims responses they had written and prepared for veterans and health care providers. This is only one of many issues within VISN 16 we have expressed serious concerns to your office about in the past. We need an honest, reliable leader to take the helm and improve the VA's practices and performance in VISN 16. Dr. McDougall's history within your agency is a compelling reason to dissuade the VA from putting her in charge of the South Central Veterans Affairs Health Care Network, or reassigning her to any other leadership position. Frankly, her appointment to lead VISN 16 is an insult to Louisiana veterans.

Given the fact that the VA is currently working to regain the trust of veterans in Louisiana and across the nation, we firmly request that you rescind Dr. McDougall's appointment, and instead choose a proven trustworthy leader who will prioritize the needs of our nation's veterans above a career in bureaucracy. We look forward to your prompt response and working with you on a qualified replacement.

Sincerely,



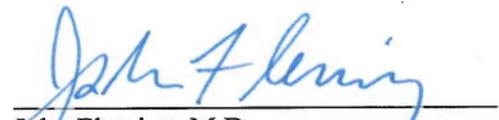
David Vitter
United States Senator



Charles W. Boustany, Jr., M.D.
Member of Congress



Steve Scalise
Member of Congress



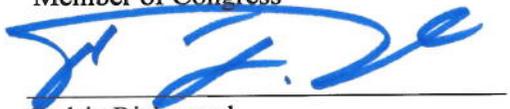
John Fleming, M.D.
Member of Congress



Garret Graves
Member of Congress



Ralph Abraham, M.D.
Member of Congress



Cedric Richmond
Member of Congress