

# United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6200

September 8, 2010

## **Via Electronic Transmission**

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

Dear Secretary Shinseki:

As a senior member of the United States Senate and as Ranking Member of the Senate Finance Committee, it is my duty under the constitution to conduct oversight into the actions of the federal government. Specifically, it is my duty to ensure that taxpayer dollars are wisely spent and not subject to waste, fraud or abuse.

My office has received both written and verbal complaints from concerned Iowans regarding the award of a lawn mowing contract for the Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center in Knoxville, Iowa. According to a September 3, 2010 KCCI report, the VA awarded a lawn mowing contract, not to the lowest bidder, but instead to a higher bidding company. Based upon the information available to me, it appears that the winning contractor will be receiving in excess of \$850,000 to cut grass on the VA Medical Center's property. However, it is my further understanding that several other companies had significantly lower bids to provide the same or similar service. It was reported that the VA received a \$342,000 bid: more than \$500,000 less expensive than the winning award. Interestingly, KCCI reported that one unnamed VA official, in response to questions about this mowing contract said that the lowest bid was "too low." I understand that still other companies that offered similarly lower bids were also rebuffed.

It is absolutely vital that during these tough economic times; tax payer dollars are spent wisely. Accordingly, I would greatly appreciate receiving a briefing from your staff to better explain the circumstances surrounding the award of this mowing contract at the VA Medical Center in Knoxville, Iowa.

Thank you in advance for your prompt attention to this matter. Should you have any questions regarding this matter, please do not hesitate to contact David Bleich of my staff at (202) 228-0927. All documents responsive to this request should be sent electronically in PDF format to [Brian\\_Downey@finance-rep.senate.gov](mailto:Brian_Downey@finance-rep.senate.gov).

Sincerely,



Charles E. Grassley  
Ranking Member

cc: The Honorable George J. Opfer  
Inspector General  
Office of the Inspector General  
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs