

PATRICK J. LEAHY, VERMONT, CHAIRMAN

HERB KOHL, WISCONSIN  
DIANNE FEINSTEIN, CALIFORNIA  
CHARLES E. SCHUMER, NEW YORK  
RICHARD J. DURBIN, ILLINOIS  
SHELDON WHITEHOUSE, RHODE ISLAND  
AMY KLOBUCHAR, MINNESOTA  
AL FRANKEN, MINNESOTA  
CHRISTOPHER A. COONS, DELAWARE  
RICHARD BLUMENTHAL, CONNECTICUT

CHARLES E. GRASSLEY, IOWA  
ORRIN G. HATCH, UTAH  
JON KYL, ARIZONA  
JEFF SESSIONS, ALABAMA  
LINDSEY O. GRAHAM, SOUTH CAROLINA  
JOHN CORNYN, TEXAS  
MICHAEL S. LEE, UTAH  
TOM COBURN, OKLAHOMA

## United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6275

BRUCE A. COHEN, *Chief Counsel and Staff Director*  
KOLAN L. DAVIS, *Republican Chief Counsel and Staff Director*

March 7, 2012

### Via Electronic Transmission

The Honorable George J. Opfer  
Inspector General  
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Avenue  
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Inspector General Opfer:

As the ranking member of the Committee on the Judiciary, it is my constitutional duty to conduct oversight into the actions of the Executive Branch, including the activities of the Department of Veterans Affairs. I write to you today regarding the Iowa City Veterans Affairs Health Care System. Over the past few months my office has received reports of a variety of serious allegations at the Iowa City facility. Many of these contacts have come from individuals who are concerned about the direction of the facility and its impact on patient care.

Individuals who have spoken to my office believe their concerns have been largely ignored by the leadership at the Iowa City VA facility. These whistleblowers fear retaliation and characterize the working atmosphere as "vindictive," which prevents many employees from voicing concerns to superiors. Morale has been described as "terrible," causing many employees to consider looking elsewhere for employment. Furthermore, it is alleged that those who keep their mouths shut about problems are rewarded with promotions while more qualified individuals are passed over for not going along with the "status quo."

Also, according to these individuals, there have been many complaints from patients and families regarding the quality of care and while these complaints are reported, the problems reoccur. In the end, the patients ultimately suffer the consequences by possibly receiving inadequate care due to the work environment that allegedly exists at this Iowa City facility.

In the past I had visited this Iowa City facility fairly regularly when my brother was a patient there about ten years ago. I was grateful that he received good care. In ten years, a lot could have changed so I take these allegations seriously when they reach my office.

The Honorable George J. Opfer

March 7, 2012

Page 2 of 2

Consequently, I am requesting your office conduct a thorough and comprehensive "top to bottom" review of this VA facility in Iowa City. I further request your office brief my staff when your work is complete. The men and women who have served our nation deserve no less than stellar care.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation with this request. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Brian Downey or Rob Donovan of my staff at (202) 224-5225.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Chuck Grassley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "C".

Charles E. Grassley  
Ranking Member