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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

KEITH B. ASHDOWN, STAFF DIRECTOR
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October 23, 2015

The Honorable Denise Turner Roth
Administrator
U.S. General Services Administration
1275 First Street NE
Washington, DC 20417

Dear Administrator Roth:

A recently published Veterans Affairs (VA) Office of Inspector General (OIG) report¹ has alleged that senior VA employees acted improperly by orchestrating job openings, steering themselves into the new positions at higher salaries than their predecessors, and reaping large relocation payments to move to begin employment in these new jobs. These are serious allegations, which led to the VA OIG making criminal referrals to the U.S. Attorney's Office regarding the actions of two VA officials. We ask your assistance in understanding what procedures are in place to prevent the abuse of taxpayer dollars in relocation expenses.

Specifically, according to the OIG report, Diana Rubens arranged her own re-assignment from her post as Deputy Under Secretary for Field Operations in Washington, D.C. to that of Director of the Philadelphia and Wilmington VA Regional Offices in June 2014. During her transition to her new position, Ms. Rubens allegedly billed the VA \$274,019 for her move to Philadelphia and to arrange for new housing. Additionally, the OIG found that Kimberly Graves, working in concert with Ms. Rubens, left her position as the Director of the Veterans Benefits Administration's Eastern Area Office in Philadelphia last October to become director of the St. Paul, Minn., VA regional office. She charged the VA \$129,467 for her moving expenses.

The OIG's allegations that these two VA officials orchestrated transfers as a means to bill the federal government hundreds of thousands of dollars of taxpayer dollars is deeply troubling. In addition, the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs just this week issued the first subpoena in the Committee's history to compel Ms. Rubens and Ms. Graves to testify on these issues.²

¹ U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of the Inspector General, Veterans Benefits Administration Administrative Investigation: Inappropriate Use of Position and Misuse of Relocation Program and Incentives, 15-02997-526, <http://www.va.gov/oig/pubs/VAOIG-15-02997-526.pdf>.

² *Business Meeting: Motion to issue subpoenas to employees of U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, to compel them to appear and provide testimony to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs on the Inspector General's final report, entitled "Inappropriate Use of Position and the Misuse of the Relocation Program and Incentives" Before the H. Comm. on Veterans' Affairs, 114th Cong. (2015).*

The VA OIG's report raises significant questions about how relocation reimbursements are handled across the federal government. Since the General Services Administration manages the federal relocation policies, we ask your assistance on how to prevent the future waste of taxpayer dollars through relocation expenses. Accordingly, we ask:

1. Please describe the procedures and requirements in place when an employee seeks reimbursement for relocation expenses (i.e. eligibility, paperwork, documentation requirements, etc.).
 - a. In your best estimate, were these procedures followed in the cases of Ms. Rubens and Ms. Graves? If not, why not?

2. Please describe what safeguards exist to prevent exorbitant relocation fees from being paid in agencies across the federal government. Specifically:
 - a. Who is responsible for monitoring relocation expenses to ensure they are reasonable, and to recoup fraudulent relocation overpayments?
 - b. Are there best practices GSA can recommend to help agencies prevent fraudulent relocation overpayments and recoup fraudulent relocation overpayments?

The Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs is authorized by Rule XXV of the Standing Rules of the Senate to investigate "the efficiency, economy, and effectiveness of all agencies and departments of the Government."³ Additionally, S. Res. 73 (114th Congress) authorizes the Committee to examine "the efficiency and economy of all branches and functions of Government with particular references to the operations and management of Federal regulatory policies and programs."⁴

If you have any questions about this request, please contact [REDACTED] of Chairman Johnson's staff at [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] of Ranking Member Carper's staff at [REDACTED].

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to receiving your response.

With best personal regards, we are

Sincerely yours,


Ron Johnson
Chairman



Thomas R. Carper
Ranking Member

³ S. Rule XXV (k); *see also* S. Res. 445, 108th Cong. (2004).

⁴ S. Res. 73 § 12, 114th Cong. (2015).