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COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

ONE HUNDRED FIFTEENTH CONGRESS

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December 10, 2018

The Honorable Robert Wilkie
Secretary, Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20571

Dear Secretary Wilkie,

I write once again asking for your full compliance with my request for documents and information regarding the sweeping influence of Mr. Ike Perlmutter, Dr. Bruce Moskowitz, and Mr. Marc Sherman over the policy and personnel decisions made by the Department of Veterans Affairs. As a defendant in a Federal lawsuit, the Department has declared these three members of President Trump's exclusive Mar-a-Lago club "asserted influence *over the Department*."¹ The documents made public in response to a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request provide further evidence of their power over key Departmental leaders.

The Committee on Veterans' Affairs, veterans, and the American people deserve to know the full nature and extent of this influential relationship between the Department and the three Mar-a-Lago members who ostensibly used their wealth and connections to President Trump and his family to make decisions on behalf of the Department. Weighing in on candidates to lead the Veterans Health Administration,² involvement in the procurement of an electronic health record from Cerner Corporation, and organizing meetings and summits between VA and commercial entities were all efforts in which the three Mar-a-Lago club members seemingly took part. The documents show you used official travel in part to meet with these individuals at Mar-a-Lago on or about April 20, 2018,³ presumably due to their significant influence over Department leadership positions, writing after the meeting that you were "honored" to visit with them.⁴

Top Department officials apparently treated the three Mar-a-Lago members as having decision-making authority. Email correspondence shows Mar-a-Lago was promised development

¹ Memorandum of Points and Authorities in Support of Defendant's Motion to Dismiss at 21.

<https://democracyforward.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/DOJ-Reply-to-VoteVets-Complaint-11-16-18.pdf>

² Department of Veterans Affairs, FOIA Service, VA Senior Leadership Emails

https://www.oprm.va.gov/foia/foia_library.aspx (under heading "Senior Leadership Emails/Travel") [hereinafter VA Senior Leadership Documents], [PORemailsto9618Redacted](#).

³ VA Senior Leadership Documents, [Robert Wilkie West Palm Beach, FL – 04.17-20.2018 Redacted](#)

⁴ VA Senior Leadership Documents, [RLW emails up to 6-5-18 Redacted](#)

of “a project plan and...timeline for action”⁵ when the Department was directed by Mar-a-Lago to stand up an “emergency committee” on mental health care delivery.⁶ Mar-a-Lago members rejected advice provided by Department experts—arranging calls and naming themselves to an “executive committee” to direct Department development of technology with Apple Inc.⁷ that could personally enrich Dr. Moskowitz and his family⁸— and organized a Department-led medical device registry summit in which Dr. Moskowitz’s family and foundation participated.⁹ The three Mar-a-Lago members— despite having no military or government experience, let alone experience delivering health care to veterans— were even granted access to review the confidential contract between the Department and Cerner Corporation for the Department’s electronic health record.¹⁰ This was more than three months before Congress received access and more than two months prior to contract signing.¹¹

The lack of transparency on behalf of the Department and the Trump Administration is utterly unacceptable. It has been four months since I sent my August 8, 2018 request for un-redacted documents. The documents released under FOIA are heavily redacted and satisfy one small portion of my request—only partially revealing the extent of the Mar-a-Lago members’ power to shape Department policy and functions.

I will continue to pursue this matter for the remainder of the 115th Congress, and I can assure you my colleagues will consider this investigation a priority in the 116th Congress. Veterans and taxpayers deserve to know who is responsible for making policy decisions that affect the millions of veterans served by the Department, and trust that individuals who make decisions for personal enrichment, or poor decisions that waste taxpayer dollars or negatively affect the delivery of veterans’ health care and benefits are held to account.

Please provide a complete response to my August 8, 2018 request no later than Thursday, December 20, 2018. If you have any questions, please contact Grace Rodden, minority General Counsel, at grace.rodden@mail.house.gov or at (202) 225-9756. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Tim Walz

⁵ VA Senior Leadership Documents, [POR emails to 5-3-18 Redacted](#) at 36.

⁶ *Id.* at 36-37.

⁷ VA Senior Leadership Documents, [DS TB CS to 6-22-18_Redacted](#)

⁸ *Id.* At 158- 159.

⁹ VA Senior Leadership Documents, [Emails JHB to 6-22-18.1_Redacted](#)

¹⁰ VA Senior Leadership Documents, [Emails POR to 6-22-18_Redacted](#) at 1- 5, 26- 40

¹¹ *Id.*