

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

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October 8, 2021

Dr. Ivan Correa
Chief of Staff
Atlanta Veteran's Affairs Health Care System
1670 Clairmont Road
Decatur, Ga. 30033

Dear Dr. Correa:

Committee Republicans are conducting oversight of the Atlanta Veterans Affairs Medical Center (AVAMC). According to recent reports, the AVAMC had ten pallets of mail sitting unopened in its basement for more than 10 months, likely delaying or preventing medical treatment for thousands of Georgia's veterans.¹

Included in the thousands of pieces of mail left in the basement were parcels "critical to veteran care," "medical records waiting to be scanned into their system", and "documents that would allow payments to private doctors who provide services to veterans."² Each of these pieces of mail potentially represents a veteran unable to receive treatment in a timely manner.

The AVAMC has publicly stated that it has begun processing six of the ten pallets of mail and is hiring more workers to catch up on the backlog.³ However, it is deeply concerning that this happened at all. In fact, according to the Inspector General of Veterans Affairs, "mail processing is one of the most important things the [Veterans Benefits Administration] does." It is clear AVAMC did not prioritize the processing of mail in a timely manner.

In order for Committee Republicans to conduct oversight and ensure that such a backlog does not occur again, please make arrangements to schedule a briefing with Committee Republicans no later than October 15, 2021, to provide answers to the following:

1) Why were these ten pallets of mail not processed?

¹ Justin Gray, *Atlanta VA begins processing mail that sat for months following investigation*, WSB-TV Atlanta, (Sep. 20, 2021), <https://www.wsbtv.com/news/local/atlanta/atlanta-va-begins-processing-mail-that-sat-months-following-investigation/AZAHFYRIHFHNDDEWHUOT7WQGY4/>

² Christopher Quinn, *Months-old mail piles up in Atlanta Veterans Affairs hospital basement*, Atlanta Journal-Constitution, (Sep. 17, 2021), <https://www.ajc.com/news/months-old-mail-piles-up-in-atlanta-veterans-affairs-hospital-basement/FMKJRDHTRFDYRDBKZ5CPW4BSVY/>

³ *Id.*

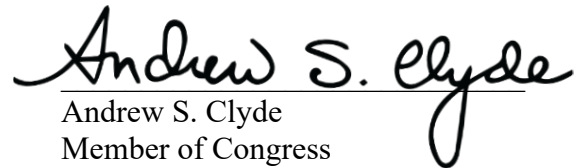
- 2) When did the pallets of mail arrive at your facility?
- 3) What have you done to ensure there is no more mail that has not been processed?
- 4) What types of documents were in the pallets that were not processed?
- 5) How many veterans' care was delayed in any way due to the failure to process this mail?
- 6) Who is being held accountable for creating this backlog of mail?
- 7) What processes and procedures are you implementing to ensure that all mail is processed upon receipt?

The Committee on Oversight and Reform is the principal oversight committee of the U.S. House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate "any matter" at "any time" under House Rule X. Thank you in advance for your cooperation with this inquiry.

Sincerely,



Jody Hice
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Government Operations



Andrew S. Clyde
Member of Congress

Cc: The Honorable Gerald E. Connolly, Chairman, Subcommittee on Government Operations
Dr. David Walker, Network Director for the VA Southeast Network
Michael J. Missal, Inspector General of Department of Veterans Affairs
The Honorable Denis McDonough, U.S. Secretary of Veterans Affairs