

MARK BEGICH
ALASKA

SUITE SR-144
RUSSELL BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510
(202) 224-3004

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
COMMITTEE ON
COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 8, 2009

The Honorable Erik K. Shinseki
Secretary of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary *Shinseki* Shinseki:

I write regarding a troubling report just received by my office, a December 7, 2009, "Inspection of VA Regional Office in Anchorage, Alaska," produced by the Veterans Affairs Office of Inspector General (OIG) Office of Audits and Evaluations.

This report essentially says Alaska's military veterans are not being properly served. It documents inadequate oversight of the office's workload, finds that claims are mistakenly processed and determined that disabled veterans have had to wait longer for benefits than necessary because of poor management practices. Many of these practices occurred before your tenure, which I know you are working hard to correct. I know you agree with me that this is unacceptable.

As you know, Alaska has the highest population of veterans per capita in the nation. Thousands of active duty Alaska servicemen and women now serving in harm's way on the front lines will soon require veterans' services. Alaska's veterans are especially challenged because we lack the full breadth of services available in Lower 48 states. We simply must improve how we care for and treat Alaska's veterans.

This report is especially frustrating because as a member of the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs, I have been working closely with you and your department to improve veterans' care. As you know, the Congress is poised to approve the largest budget increase for the VA in history, at the request of the Obama Administration. Please report to me as soon as possible how the VA plans to address the many inadequacies found by this Inspector General report.

At Wednesday's hearing of the Veterans Affairs Committee, I plan to raise many questions about this report to two nominees for top positions at the VA.

Sincerely,



Mark Begich
United States Senator