

# **Rubio Calls on Reid to Allow a Senate Vote on VA Reform Bill**

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL) today called on Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) to allow a vote on S. 2013, the VA Management and Accountability Act of 2014, a bill that would empower whomever may replace Secretary Shinseki with complete authority to fire or demote VA Senior Executive Service (SES) or equivalent employees based on performance. Rubio is the Senate’s original sponsor of the bill, which passed the U.S. House of Representatives with the support of 165 Democrats.

The bill is currently co-sponsored by ten Senate Democrats: Senators Bill Nelson (D-FL), Mark Warner (D-VA), Mark Pryor (D-AR), Mary Landrieu (D-LA), Jean Shaheen (D-NH), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Kay Hagan (D-NC), Al Franken (D-MN), Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) and John Walsh (D-MT).

Amid recent revelations of widespread, systemic problems at the VA, Rubio wrote a letter to Reid today requesting the common sense, bipartisan legislation be brought to the Senate floor immediately so that Congress may take an important first step toward bringing much needed accountability to the VA and providing our veterans with the care they deserve.

“As the Majority Leader of the United States Senate, you and you alone control what legislation is brought before the Senate for a vote. In this important role, you can make a vital difference in the reforms that are needed to improve the quality of care our nation’s heroes receive,” wrote Rubio. “As you know, the House of Representatives recently passed the common sense and bipartisan S. 2013 The VA Management and Accountability Act of 2014 with the support of 165 Democrats.

“That legislation is now before the Senate for consideration and is sponsored by ten Senate Democrats, including the Senators from Arkansas, California, Florida, Louisiana, Minnesota, Montana, New Hampshire, North Carolina and Virginia,” added Rubio. “Their backing means there is currently a strong bi-partisan support for this legislation which would bring accountability to VA and empower the leadership therein to make the same hiring and firing decisions you enjoy as a United States Senator with your own staff.

“This legislation alone will not solve all the problems at the VA. Problems which, to be fair, existed before President Obama took office. But this legislation will take an important step forward in helping reform this broken government institution,” continued Rubio. “It might also help restore some faith in the Senate’s ability to achieve even incremental reform to a government that too many Americans believe is no longer capable of even the most basic functions.”

The full text of the letter is below.

June 3, 2014

The Honorable Harry Reid

Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
U.S. Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Majority Leader Reid,

I know you share my disgust with the recent revelations at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the shameful way in which a few employees mistreated America's heroes.

The problem is so pervasive in the VA that an internal audit found that wait times for veterans' appointments were falsified and manipulated at 64% of VA health facilities.

As the Majority Leader of the United States Senate, you and you alone control what legislation is brought before the Senate for a vote. In this important role, you can make a vital difference in the reforms that are needed to improve the quality of care our nation's heroes receive.

As you know, the House of Representatives recently passed the common sense and bi-partisan S. 2013 The VA Management and Accountability Act of 2014 with the support of 165 Democrats. That legislation is now before the Senate for consideration and is sponsored by ten Senate Democrats, including the Senators from Arkansas, California, Florida, Louisiana, Minnesota, Montana, New Hampshire, North Carolina and Virginia. Their backing means there is currently a strong bi-partisan support for this legislation which would bring accountability to VA and empower the leadership therein to make the same hiring and firing decisions you enjoy as a United States Senator with your own staff.

This legislation alone will not solve all the problems at the VA. Problems which, to be fair, existed before President Obama took office. But this legislation will take an important step forward in helping reform this broken government institution. It might also help restore some faith in the Senate's ability to achieve even incremental reform to a government that too many Americans believe is no longer capable of even the most basic functions.

Therefore, I respectfully request that you bring this legislation to the Senate floor as quickly as possible for an up or down vote. This legislation is an important first step that will bring needed accountability to the VA. Our veterans have given a great deal to our nation and they deserve to see their elected representatives in the U.S. Senate vote on this very important piece of legislation.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Sincerely,

Marco Rubio  
U.S. Senator