

JOHN McCAIN
ARIZONA

CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE ON
ARMED SERVICES
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS

United States Senate

October 15, 2015

The Honorable Robert McDonald
Secretary
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20420

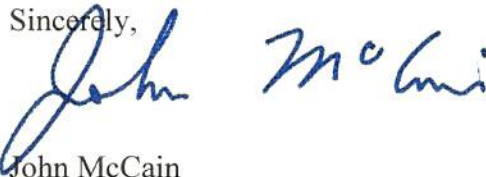
Dear Secretary McDonald,

I was surprised to learn through media reports today that Skye McDougall, the acting director of the Desert Pacific Healthcare Network in California, has been named director of the Southwest Health Care Network. In her new capacity, Ms. McDougall will oversee the Phoenix VA and other hospitals across Arizona and be responsible for ensuring that veterans across the Southwest receive the medical care they need.¹ However, based on reports that Ms. McDougall purposely misled Congress regarding wait times for veterans in Southern California, I am extremely concerned by this appointment. I believe that this selection does nothing to regain veterans' confidence that the VA has been reformed in the aftermath of the tragic scandal during which veterans died waiting for care while senior VA executives collected monetary bonuses.

As the Phoenix VA Health Care System was ground zero for that scandal, the veterans in my state deserve better than to have a director who misled Congress about patient wait times or understated the severity of the VA's failures. Further, while Ms. McDougall appears to have extensive experience in research and as part of the VA bureaucracy, our veterans deserve to have a leader who understands patient care and knows how to improve it.

Given that the VA is still working to earn back the trust of veterans it betrayed from last year's scandal and its own employees who have lost faith in the integrity of their senior leaders, I urge you to reconsider this selection.

Thank you for your timely response to this letter.

Sincerely,

John McCain
United States Senator

¹ Wagner, Dennis, "Department of Veterans Affairs names new regional health Director," The Arizona Republic, October 15, 2015, <http://www.azcentral.com/story/news/arizona/politics/2015/10/15/departments-veterans-affairs-names-new-regional-health-director/73900478/>.

218 RUSSELL SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0303
(202) 224-2235

2201 EAST CAMELBACK ROAD
SUITE 115
PHOENIX, AZ 85016
(602) 952-2410

122 NORTH CORTEZ STREET
SUITE 108
PRESCOTT, AZ 86301
(928) 445-0833

407 WEST CONGRESS STREET
SUITE 103
TUCSON, AZ 85701
(520) 670-6334

TELEPHONE FOR HEARING IMPAIRED
(602) 952-0170