

**Senator Marco Rubio**

**Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs**

**Full Committee**

**Hearing: Pending Health Care and Benefits Legislation**

**June 24, 2015**

**Statement for the Record**

Chairman Isakson, Ranking Member Blumenthal, and members of the Committee, thank you for holding this hearing today. I would like to submit for the record my views on pending legislation before the committee, namely S. 1082, the Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability Act of 2015.

In the wake of reports detailing how very few people have been held accountable for last year's scandal at the Department of Veterans Affairs, on April 23, 2015, I introduced the "Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability Act of 2015," which would give the VA secretary new, expanded authorities to remove or demote any VA employee based on poor performance or misconduct.

This legislation would expand on last year's VA reform law by giving the VA secretary the authority to terminate any employees for performance-related issues, not just managers. It mirrors legislation (H.R.1994) filed in the U.S. House of Representatives by House Veterans Affairs Committee Chairman Jeff Miller.

Last year, I was proud to lead the effort to give the VA secretary the authority to fire senior executives based on performance. A year later, it's clear additional authorities are needed to deal with the full scope of the problems at the VA. Once enacted into law, this new legislation will leave the VA secretary with no excuse but to hold people accountable for the dysfunction and incompetence plaguing our VA system, while protecting whistleblowers from retaliation. We must show our veterans the respect they have earned by removing any employees with terrible performance from the system our veterans rely on.

I also want to recognize that later this week the [Subcommittee of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform](#) will hold its own hearing on reforming the VA. It will hear testimony from Florida constituent and St. Johns County Assistant Administrator Jerry Cameron about problems stemming from the VA's selection and leasing process for new facilities. It represents part of a larger national problem regarding our VA facilities, which are experiencing significant delays and cost overruns that ultimately hurt both veterans and taxpayers.

I strongly support S.1082 and recommend the committee favorably report the bill out as soon as possible so that it receives a vote by the full U.S. Senate. I also hope today's hearing will help shed light on VA accountability reform and provide the committee with a better understanding of how we can best serve our veterans.

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