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J. Randy Forbes
United States Congress
4th District, Virginia

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Robert A. McDonald
Secretary of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary McDonald:

I would like to join my fellow members of Congress and share my concerns over recent allegations that the Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) is still unable to meet the needs of some of our veterans who may be in dire need of our help.

According to multiple news reports, the Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) is allowing calls into the dedicated crisis hotline to go to voicemail. Worse yet, those voicemails are not being returned and help is not being offered to those veterans.

These reports are saddening and frustrating, especially considering the past problems in veteran treatment at VA hospitals. Your agency is obligated to provide essential and adequate care for our veterans and allowing their calls to end up in an unanswered voicemail inbox is a failure of great magnitude and appears to be a systemic problem. It must be rooted out and a culture of care and compassion put back in place so that veterans can once again rely upon and use the services the VA is obligated to provide them.

There are more than 21 million veterans across America, and if they cannot count on the VA to provide them with help and guidance in their time of greatest need then the VA has failed in its core mission. The veteran suicide rate is many times higher than the general population and there must be an internal investigation into the claims mentioned above to ensure that the problem can be identified and a solution put in place. I look forward to hearing your improvement plan for solving this problem and correcting the failure to show our veterans that the VA is there to help them get through tough times.

Sincerely,

J. RANDY FORBES
Member of Congress