

VSO Letter to President Trump regarding Secretary Wilkie Removal

The Honorable Donald J. Trump, President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Mr. President:

On behalf of America's leading veterans service organizations, we write to ask that you take swift action to hold Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Secretary Robert Wilkie and other senior VA leaders accountable for failing to fulfill their sworn duties in responding to a disabled veteran's 2019 sexual assault claim at the Washington D.C. VA Medical Center.

After thoroughly reviewing the VA Office of Inspector General's (OIG) report released last week, our organizations have concluded that as a result of the Secretary's personal actions in his matter, he no longer has the trust or confidence of America's veterans and should be removed.

The December 10th OIG report found that "...Secretary Wilkie made comments that questioned the veteran's credibility or were otherwise denigrating to her..." and "...set the tone for VA officials' attempts to focus the national media on the veteran's background and credibility." Additionally, the report notes that the investigation was, "... hindered by the refusal of several senior VA officials to cooperate...", including Secretary Wilkie.

While this troubling report illustrates that several senior VA staff members played a role in the mishandling of this case, the findings make clear that the Secretary himself established

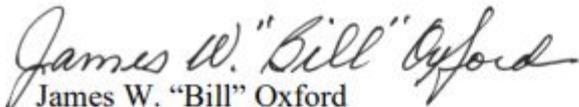
a defensive posture and made decisions to personally disparage the veteran and circumvent the subsequent IG investigation.

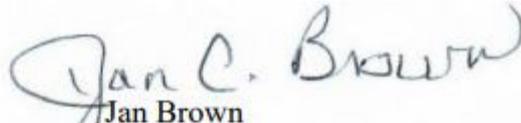
This is a tremendous breach of trust among veterans and Secretary Wilkie must be held accountable. His actions not only threaten to deter veterans from seeking care at VA, but also undermine the efforts of VA staff who have been working to bring an end to sexual harassment throughout the department.

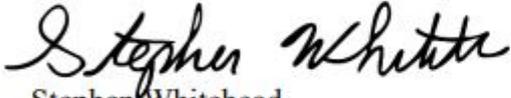
One in four women veterans report having experienced some form of sexual assault or harassment within VA. Solving this problem takes strong and committed leadership, and we no longer believe Secretary Wilkie is capable of leading this charge or performing his duties in the best interest of veterans.

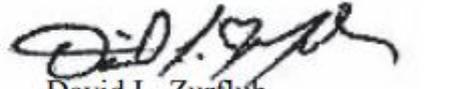
Mr. President, sexual assault and harassment have no place in the VA or our society as a whole. As the Secretary has refused to take responsibility for his documented wrongdoing in this matter, we, the leaders of the undersigned veterans service organizations, call on you to take further action by immediately removing him from office.

Respectfully,


James W. "Bill" Oxford
National Commander
The American Legion


Jan Brown
National Commander
AMVETS


Stephen Whitehead
National Commander
DAV (Disabled American Veterans)


David L. Zurfluh
National President
Paralyzed Veterans of America


Harold "Hal" Roesch II
National Commander
Veterans of Foreign Wars


John Rowan
National President
Vietnam Veterans of America