United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 20, 2015

The Honorable Robert A. McDonald
Secretary of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary McDonald,

We are writing to express our serious concerns about the lack of stable leadership in the St. Louis VA Health Care System. As you know, the St. Louis VA system provides mental and physical health care services to almost 46,000 veterans every year. Given this enormous responsibility, it is vitally important that the VA have strong leadership capable of ensuring that high standards are being met and maintained.

On May 18, the Department of Veterans Affairs Inspector General released a report detailing its most recent Combined Assessment Program (CAP) review of the St. Louis VA Health Care System. The CAP report contains 45 specific recommendations to correct for deficiencies in areas such as quality management, environment of care, and medication management. Furthermore, the report indicates that the St. Louis VA ranks in the bottom quintile nationally in a number of important areas, and overall performance in some areas has declined from the previous CAP review.

Immediate steps must be taken by the current leadership at the St. Louis VA to implement the IG's recommendations. However, making permanent improvements will require strong, consistent leadership willing and able to enforce standards and provide staff the guidance they need to properly care for our veterans. Since 2013, the position of director of the St. Louis VA Health Care System has been filled by seven different individuals each of whom has served in an acting capacity. The newest Acting Director arrived at the St. Louis VA just last week, and we understand that she is scheduled to be in the position for only a matter of months. We are concerned that this rapid turnover has degraded the St. Louis VA's ability to provide an appropriate standard of care for our veterans.

To this end, we request that you provide our offices with a plan to ensure that the office of the director of the St. Louis VA Health Care System is filled with a permanent official as soon as possible.

We look forward to continuing to work with you to improve the quality of care for veterans in St. Louis and throughout Missouri.

Sincerely,

Claire McCaskill
United States Senator

Roy Blunt
United States Senator