



November 10, 2015

The Honorable Bob McDonald, Secretary
The Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary McDonald,

On behalf of managers and supervisors throughout the federal government, including the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), whose interests are represented by the Federal Managers Association (FMA) and the Senior Executives Association (SEA), we wish to discuss a growing concern on the status of labor-management relations at the VA.

In July, the *Washington Post* published an [article](#) in which the President of the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE), Local 17, commented that you personally solicited a report listing federal managers and supervisors throughout VA whom the union viewed as barriers to the success of the Department. Several managers and supervisors listed by AFGE, Local 17, as well as from around the nation, have contacted FMA and SEA. While they corroborated the fact that complaints have been filed against them, complaints were often found to be unsubstantiated. Because these managers and supervisors had repeated, yet groundless, accusations against them, FMA and SEA worry that instead of thoughtfully examining constructive means to improve VA, Local 17 is personally targeting managers and supervisors and perpetuating labor-management hostility. Additionally, since FMA and SEA first spoke out against AFGE, Local 17's "hit list", we have heard from several VA managers and supervisors who have been verbally threatened and harassed by union representatives and members. Others have reported receiving threats of physical violence, even death. The actions of AFGE, Local 17, are not conducive to creating an efficient and functioning VA that can overcome its internal issues.

While neither you nor your office has yet to confirm whether or not you specifically asked for this report, or if you have received it, we ask that if you have received and read this report, the report should be given little credence. We ask that you examine the personnel records of those managers and supervisors listed in the report before any actions are taken. We call upon you to examine charges filed against them and the failure to find supportive evidence. We recommend you do not blindly follow the demands of AFGE, Local 17, but instead consider the personnel needs of VA. As the VA continues to recover from the events of 2014, we urge you to make thoughtful, developed plans that meet the needs of not only our nation's veterans, but also the dedicated men and women who work at VA.

Additionally, FMA and SEA previously [wrote to leadership](#) within the House and Senate Committees on Veterans' Affairs, the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs. In correspondence, we asked for the committees to investigate whether or not the internal review conducted by AFGE, Local 17, to compile its report was completed on official time. While official time provides for federal labor organizations to conduct representational activities, it does not cover a union investigating agency managers and executives for the purpose of creating a "hit list" of those it seeks to have removed from the agency. We



ask that you also inquire whether or not unfair or improper practices took place in order to produce this report.

We appreciate your attention to this critical matter. If you have any questions, please contact SEA Legislative Director Jason Briefel at jbriefel@shawbransford.com, or FMA Government & Public Affairs Director Greg Stanford at gstanford@fedmanagers.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Timothy M. Dirks". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "T".

TIMOTHY M. DIRKS
Interim President
Senior Executives Association

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patricia J. Niehaus". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "P".

PATRICIA J. NIEHAUS
President
Federal Managers Association