

[New VA Whistleblowers Revealed – Allegations of Retaliation Detailed in Letter To Acting VA Secretary Sloan Gibson](#)

New York, NY (July 21, 2014) – Today, Project on Government Oversight (POGO) sent a letter detailing a toxic culture of retaliation at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to Acting VA Secretary Sloan Gibson. The letter describes how Palo Alto VA System Inpatient Pharmacy Technician Supervisor Stuart Kallio was placed on administrative leave pending an investigation after complaining to a director of the Palo Alto VA that inpatients were suffering from “unconscionable errors and delays” in the delivery of needed medications.

Along with Kallio’s case, additional stories of alleged retaliation against internal VA whistleblowers were included in the letter. You can read the letter [here](#).

In May, IAVA and POGO joined together to protect VA staff who came forward with information about agency wrongdoing. As part of the effort, the organizations have launched a secure website, www.VA0versight.org, where VA employees can report stories of abuse. The effort combines IAVA’s deep knowledge of the VA system with POGO’s experience working with whistleblowers to expose federal wrongdoing.

Since the website launched, almost 800 people have contacted POGO – the most submissions on a single issue in its 33-year history.

“The hostile and corrupt culture uncovered by this POGO investigation confirms what IAVA has been pointing out for years: the VA system is severely broken and must be overhauled from top to bottom,” said IAVA CEO and Founder Paul Rieckhoff. “These allegations of cover-ups and retaliation against whistleblowers should draw universal condemnation. Our vets deserve better. While IAVA intends to work with our leaders in Washington to enact reforms, we also intend to hold them accountable if the VA’s new leadership fails to get these problems under control. Vets are suffering and in some cases dying because of the VA’s failings. We intend to continue to push for the truth and for reforms so that all of our nation’s vets are treated with the respect and care they earned.”

“POGO has never witnessed such a toxic culture of retaliation across an entire agency. Acting Secretary Gibson should meet with whistleblowers immediately and put meaning behind his promises of change. In addition, Congress must act to pass pending reforms. Proposed legislation would hold VA wrongdoers accountable; however, such reforms should make clear that the definition of ‘wrongdoing’ includes retaliating against whistleblowers and

veterans who complain about care. Until we eliminate the culture of intimidation and climate of fear, no reforms will be able to turn this broken agency around,” said POGO Executive Director Danielle Brian.

In early June, IAVA unveiled a “[Marshall Plan](#)” for veterans: eight steps the Obama Administration and Congress can take now to restore confidence in the VA. Among the steps are recommendations from IAVA’s [2014 Policy Agenda](#). IAVA urges Congress and the President to enact all of the recommendations from the plan.

About POGO:

Founded in 1981, POGO is a nonpartisan independent watchdog that champions good government reforms. POGO’s investigations into corruption, misconduct, and conflicts of interest achieve a more effective, accountable, open, and ethical federal government.