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## United States Senate

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March 27, 2019

### VIA ELECTRONIC DELIVERY

The Honorable Michael J. Missal  
Inspector General  
Office of Inspector General  
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Inspector General Missal:

I write to request that the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Office of Inspector General (OIG) initiate an investigation into the potential manipulation of the public comment submission process concerning an ongoing VA rulemaking.

Preliminary reports and observed suspicious activity indicate that an unusually high volume of identical public comments were submitted for the VA proposed rule to amend its regulations for the Veterans Community Care Program. This rule will establish the access standards authorized under the VA MISSION Act of 2018 for covered Veterans to receive necessary hospital care, medical services and extended care services from non-VA entities or providers in the community.

Any effort to manipulate or subvert the integrity of the Federal rulemaking process is alarming and may involve potential statutory, regulatory and policy violations. Worst of all, if automated entities are spamming the public comment process, this not only wastes taxpayer dollars in the form of hours spent sifting through bot-generated messages, but it also threatens to drown out the voices of real Veterans, Veterans Service Organizations and other advocates.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of my request. If you have any questions about this oversight inquiry, please have your office contact Ms. Kayda Keleher at (202) 224-2854 or [Kayda\\_Keleher@duckworth.senate.gov](mailto:Kayda_Keleher@duckworth.senate.gov).

Sincerely,



Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator