

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 5, 2024

The Honorable Denis McDonough
Secretary
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20420

Dear Secretary McDonough,

We write today demanding the firing of RimaAnn Nelson, Assistant Under Secretary for Health Operations at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and request on behalf of our nation's 16 million veterans that your department abandon its woke agenda and refocus all of its resources on serving and caring for the veterans who sacrificed for our country.

Recently you were forced to take corrective action to rescind a VHA memorandum issued by Ms. Nelson that banned the "V-J Day in Times Square" photograph from all medical facilities. This politically driven memo was authored for the absurd purpose of fostering a "more trauma-informed environment that promotes psychological safety." Sadly, this pursuit was only the most recent in a long line of misguided actions and woke agendas dictating the management of the VA. It is alarming that this is not only a common occurrence under your leadership, but a reoccurring theme under this administration of politics being a focal point of the VA instead of a veteran centric mission.

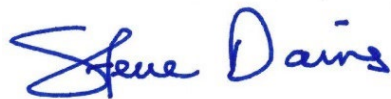
Not only was this proposed policy ill-conceived, but it was also somehow deemed a VHA operational priority during a time when there are significant issues with recruitment and retention, hiring freezes, and budgetary constraints. It raises the question of VHA's organizational structure and the qualifications of some of its core management.

To that end, in addition to firing Ms. Nelson immediately, we believe the veterans of this country are owed very specific answers to the following questions:

- What is the process for drafting and approving VHA operations memos such as the one referenced?
- Did the Office of Management and Budget, Domestic Policy Council or the White House provide input for this guidance?
- Was a draft of this memorandum provided to the Office of the Executive Secretary for review or approval?
- How was this policy deemed to benefit either veterans or health care operations?
- What other memorandum has Ms. Nelson promulgated?

The VA needs to reassess its priorities and start putting veterans at the center of their everyday operating posture. This cannot begin to happen with leadership structures advocating political policies over veteran priorities and those responsible for this misguided memo need to be held accountable, starting with the termination of Ms. Nelson's employment at the VA.

Sincerely,



Steve Daines
United States Senator



Ryan Zinke
Member of Congress