

FRENCH HILL
2ND DISTRICT, ARKANSAS

COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL SERVICES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CAPITAL MARKETS AND
GOVERNMENT SPONSORED ENTERPRISES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND
INVESTIGATIONS



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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The Honorable Robert McDonald
Secretary
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Ave NW
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Dear Secretary McDonald:

In June 2015, I reestablished the Golden Fleece Award and awarded the inaugural Golden Fleece to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for the mishandling of the \$8 million solar panel project at the Little Rock Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC). Now, more than one year later, the VA Office of Inspector General (VAOIG) has released a report highlighting the mismanagement of numerous solar projects at the VA, and once again the VA is the recipient of another Golden Fleece Award.

According to the recent report the Little Rock VA medical facility solar project is not expected to be fully completed until January 2017, 4 years beyond its original completion date and \$1.5 million over budget. Additionally, the VAOIG report found that planning errors, design changes, a lengthy interconnection process, and contractor delays led to deficiencies in other projects throughout the country resulting in additional costs and no increase in renewable energy for solar project in the planned time frame. It is also troubling that the VA has contested the VAOIG's comments and recommendations, especially regarding the solar panel project in Little Rock, and that the director and chief engineer during the initiation of this project have since retired and were not available for questioning.

The OIG report does little to instill confidence in VA's ability to effectively manage construction projects. Whether it is a project as complex as hospital construction or one as simple as the proper installation of solar panels, VA continues to waste large amounts of taxpayer funds as a result of its own ineptitude. Now we know that it isn't solely a Little Rock VA problem but one that has a much larger geographic and fiscal scope than originally believed.

While Congress needs to increase oversight into all VA construction activities to ensure these types of avoidable failures do not happen in the future, it is imperative that VA leadership heed the recommendations of the VAOIG. I request that you provide my office with additional details on the VA's implementation of additional controls to prevent further mismanagement of these construction projects.

I remain committed to eradicating this type of inefficient and ineffective spending and today's Golden Fleece highlights the mismanagement of these essential taxpayer dollars.

Sincerely,

French Hill
Member of Congress