



Editorial: Failing our vets

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Last summer an audit was released by the Department of Veterans Affairs which stated in the very first sentence of the report, “At the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), our most important mission is to provide the high quality health care and benefits Veterans have earned and deserve – when and where they need it.” That audit followed the revelation and national uproar that the VA is failing at the very core of its mission – providing care when veterans need it.

This week a new report was made public that further underscores how the VA has failed in the area of providing quality health care in a timely manner; so much so that according to this new Department of Veteran Affairs inspector general report, more than 300,000 American military veterans likely died while waiting for health care. That number is sure to climb as more than 600,000 veterans are still waiting to receive care.

Contrary to what you may have expected, according to a report by the Cato Institute the number of Veteran Affairs employees grew 56 percent from 2000 to 2013 to 341,000 employees. Of the 341,000 employees, 90 percent are employed in the Veterans Health Administration. So while there would seem to have been sufficient growth in the VA’s health focused workforce to handle veteran needs it is not translating into any meaningful or positive results on behalf of veterans.

These men and women put their lives on the line to protect this nation and this is how we treat them? This a national disgrace and a failure beyond measure. We call upon all Alabama state legislators to make it a top priority to hold those in charge at the VA accountable to ensure all issues related to our veterans and their healthcare are a thing of the past and that our Alabama veterans from this day forward will be taken care of in the manner they so duly deserve.