

# United States Senate

November 1, 2024

The Honorable Denis R. McDonough  
Secretary of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary McDonough,

We write to express deep concern regarding the unauthorized access to the medical records of vice-presidential candidates Senator JD Vance and Governor Tim Walz by numerous Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) employees. We urge you to swiftly address the actions of these individuals and to take steps to prevent similar future conduct.

Nine million veterans rely on the VA to protect their medical records. Recent reports indicate that at least a dozen VA employees improperly accessed Vance and Walz's records using their VA computers in July and August 2024. The actions of those employees call into question the effectiveness of the VA's internal security protocols, particularly given that the employees successfully accessed the records of two extremely high-profile veterans.

Given the high-stakes political climate, this breach also raises the possibility that VA personnel accessed these records for political purposes. Regardless of their motives, these employees' flagrant violation of veterans' medical privacy calls into question whether veterans can trust the VA to protect their confidential information.

It is imperative that the VA act now to strengthen its institutional safeguards surrounding medical record access and limit the access of the employees in question. Safeguarding the confidentiality of veterans' medical records is a grave responsibility, and failing to act decisively may cause many veterans to question whether their records are protected from malicious or inappropriately curious VA employees.

Please respond to the following questions no later than November 15, 2024:

1. Does the VA have a system to designate certain veterans as "high-profile"? If so, what criteria does the VA use to make that determination, and what additional safeguards are implemented to protect the records of such veterans?
2. What steps has the VA already taken to prevent unauthorized access to veterans' medical records by VA personnel in light of the July and August 2024 breaches?
3. What additional measures will you implement to prevent similar future breaches?

4. Without rendering judgment on the actions of the employees under investigation, what administrative measures do you deem appropriate to impose on VA employees that improperly access veterans' medical records?

The repeated, unauthorized access of veterans' medical records by VA employees is a serious breach of trust that demands swift and decisive action. We urge you to act immediately to safeguard the medical privacy of every veteran in the VA system and to prevent such activity in the future.

Sincerely,



Ted Cruz  
United States Senator



Marco Rubio  
United States Senator



Bill Hagerty  
United States Senator



Mike Braun  
United States Senator



Ted Budd  
United States Senator



Thom Tillis  
United States Senator



Marsha Blackburn  
United States Senator



Joni K. Ernst  
United States Senator

Cc: The Honorable Merrick B. Garland, Attorney General

