



*(October 22, 2015)*

In order to further improve the lines of communication and to respond to the concerns between the National VA Council and you our members, I have established a National VA Council Briefing. This NVAC Briefing will bring you the latest news and developments within DVA and provide you with the current status of issues this Council is currently addressing. I believe that this NVAC Briefing will greatly enhance the way in which we communicate and the way in which we share new information, keeping you better informed.

**Alma L. Lee**  
National VA Council, President

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**In This Briefing:** [House committee subpoenas VA execs after hearing no-show](#)  
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Five executives from the Department of Veterans Affairs, including two who have been accused of using their positions for profit, are now being subpoenaed by Congress after failing to show up at a House committee hearing. The House Committee on Veterans' Affairs hearing was to look into an inspector general's report on accusations that executives Diana Rubens and Kimberly Graves abused their positions in the department for personal gain by gaming system rules to obtain lower-responsibility positions while keeping higher salaries.

Rubens, Graves and other executives, including Danny Pummill, principal deputy Under Secretary for Benefits, were no-shows for the committee hearing this morning, prompting the committee to unanimously vote to subpoena the group for a Nov. 2 hearing. "Today represents just the fourth time in committee history that a subpoena has been called for and the first time that we will vote on a subpoena compelling individuals to appear and provide testimony, said committee chair Jeff Miller, R-Fla. "I assure you that I have not come to this decision lightly." Deputy VA Secretary Sloan Gibson wrote to Miller offering to appear in place of the five requested witnesses, an offer he repeated in a letter sent Oct. 20 to Miller. "I have offered to appear at your October 21, 2015, hearing to testify about the policy improvements VA is making pursuant to OIG's

recommendations regarding VA's permanent change of station and relocation incentive policies," he wrote. "In particular, yesterday the Department announced that it would cease offering the Appraised Value Offer program to employees. I remain available to testify at any mutually convenient time regarding these policy issues."

The controversy surrounds a Sept. 28 report from the VA inspector general that alleged Ruben and Graves created director vacancies in Philadelphia and St. Paul by pressuring directors there to take transfers.

#### FEDERAL TIMES

#### [OIG: Two VA execs misused positions to their benefit](#)

The pair then resigned their higher positions to fill the vacancies, which had less responsibility but, through federal benefits rules, allowed them to keep their original salaries. The VA also paid for the pair to relocate, with two extensions of benefits for Rubens' move approved by Graves, her then subordinate. The committee invited the pair, alongside the executives they allegedly pressured to transfer, Los Angeles VA Regional Office director Robert McKenrick and Baltimore Regional Office director Antione Waller. Linda Halliday, VA deputy inspector general, testified before the committee, saying, in a statement, that the report found that the Veterans Benefits Administration spent \$1.8 million on the 23 reassignments we reviewed from 2013- 2015 and "concluded that VBA inappropriately used VA's PCS relocation program for the benefit of its SES workforce." Miller said in a statement that he had requested on Oct. 1 that the group and Veterans Affairs Department Under Secretary for Benefits Allison Hickey testify before the committee. Hickey resigned her position on Oct. 16, and Miller said that "after several requests for a confirmation from VA on Oct. 15 we received a letter from Deputy Secretary [Sloan] Gibson stating that the witnesses I requested would not be made available for this hearing, and instead he would testify on the Department's behalf. The requested witnesses are now subpoenaed to appear before the committee at a Nov. 2 hearing. Failure to appear would then put them in contempt of Congress and subject to arrest.