

Defense Appropriations Subcommittee Holds Hearing on Walter Reed

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Rothman Asks Soldiers and Veterans to Call His Office for Help

(Washington, DC)—Congressman Steve Rothman (D-NJ) is asking all Active Duty service members, Reservists, National Guardsmen, as well as veterans, family members and advocates, to call, write, or email him to report any and all instances of sub-standard care or housing in a military or Veterans' Administration facility in New Jersey. Rothman's call comes after an emotional hearing held this week by the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, of which he is a member, on deplorable conditions at Walter Reed Medical Center.

"Aloof leadership, unresponsive administrators, and a culture of secrecy led to the problems at Walter Reed. Yet, after questioning the Surgeon General, I find it hard to believe that such a complete and utter failure in Army Medicine could be isolated to Walter Reed—especially when this fish is clearly rotten from the head. And so, I am asking all of New Jersey's current and prior service members in need of help to contact my offices. No problem, once identified, is too small or too large for me and my caseworkers to help you solve," said Rothman.

The Committee members' 2 ½ hours of questioning was aimed at Army Surgeon General, Lt. General Kevin Kiley, and the Chief of Staff for the United States Army, General Peter Schoomaker. Lt. General Kiley was in command at Walter Reed from 2002-2004 and lives across from the infamous Building 18 where soldiers recuperated from their battle injuries amid mold, rats, roaches, leaks, and filth.

"Lt. Gen. Kiley repeatedly said that he takes full responsibility for the situation at Walter Reed. But I'm tired of hearing apologies from the Bush Administration's appointees. I want to see action. And based on the ongoing pattern of failure from this Administration, it's up to Congress to keep the spotlight on them to promptly fix these problems. The Democratic Majority will keep holding hearings and asking questions. In the meantime, I don't want anyone to fear taking their case outside of the military bureaucracy. Those who have put their lives on the line for our country deserve better than this and it is my honor and my job to serve them," added Rothman.

During the hearing, it was revealed that top brass, including the Surgeon General himself, had been slow or unresponsive to Members of Congress who intervened in the cases of their constituents, and that service members were told not to speak to the press.

In response to questioning by Rothman, Lt. General Kiley admitted that he left his post at Walter Reed in 2004 knowing that he had not solved all of the problems he knew about and that he did not outline those problems to his replacement to ensure follow-up. "It made me wonder why he still has a job," said Rothman.

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