

U.S. House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

ONE HUNDRED SIXTEENTH CONGRESS

3460 O'NEILL HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20024

<http://veterans.house.gov>

February 19, 2019

The Honorable Robert Wilkie
Secretary
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20420

Dear Mr. Secretary:

According to a report published in ProPublica, the Department of Veterans' Affairs has spent approximately \$13,000 since October 2018 on travel expenses for Mr. Darin Selnick, a senior advisor in the Office of the Secretary. According to this report, Mr. Selnick made 6 trips to Washington, D.C. from his home in California, traveling to Washington, D.C. twice a month to perform work at the VA Central Office.¹

Mr. Selnick's position and role at the Department remain unclear. If Mr. Selnick is an advisor in the Office of the Secretary, Mr. Selnick's duty station should be Washington, D.C., in the same location as the Office of the Secretary, so that precious taxpayer funds are not wasted paying commuting costs for employees.

Under 5 U.S.C. §5702, the travel expenses of a federal employee are permitted if the employee is traveling on "official business away from the employee's designated post of duty."² If Mr. Selnick's post of duty existed within the Veterans Health Administration or Veterans Benefits Administration, and his duties were performed at a facility within California, it remains unclear what those duties were and to which facility or office he was assigned, as his travel vouchers do not indicate a duty station. All reports and briefings indicate that Mr. Selnick's duty station is Washington, D.C. in the Office of the Secretary, as leader of the executive steering committee responsible for implementing the VA MISSION Act of 2018 (Pub. L. No. 115-182).

To better ascertain Mr. Selnick's role and duties at the Department, and the Department's rationale for paying his travel expenses from California to perform work in Office of the Secretary located in Washington, D.C., I request answers to the following questions and production of the following items:

¹ Isaac Arnsdorf, *The VA is Paying for a Top Official's Cross-Country Commute*, ProPublica (Feb. 15, 2019), <https://www.propublica.org/article/veterans-affairs-department-paying-for-darin-selnick-commute-at-taxpayer-expense>.

² 5 U.S.C. §5702.

1. What were Mr. Selnick's duties from October to December 2018?
2. What was Mr. Selnick's assigned duty station from October to December 2018?
3. What are Mr. Selnick's current duties and to which duty station is he currently assigned?
4. Please provide any communications or documents related to approval of Mr. Selnick's travel by VA ethics officials.
5. What were the reasons for Mr. Selnick's travel to Washington, D.C. twice a month?
6. Did the Department consider other candidates to lead the executive steering committee if the work was to be performed in the Washington, D.C. metro area?
 - a. How many other candidates were considered for the position?
 - b. What skill sets and expertise does Mr. Selnick possess, and are those skills not available in the Washington, D.C. metro area?
7. If Mr. Selnick's duties and assigned duty station is in the Office of the Secretary, has Mr. Selnick relocated to Washington, D.C.?

If Mr. Selnick's assigned duty station is or was Washington, D.C., and the Department made improper payments of travel expenses to Mr. Selnick, please provide me a plan to ensure the Department recoups these expenses from Mr. Selnick. Please provide a response by Friday, March 8, 2019. If you have any questions, please contact Grace Rodden, General Counsel, at (202) 225-9756.

Sincerely,



Mark Takano
Chairman