

VA



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

Under Secretary for Health  
Washington DC 20420

AUG 30 2019

The Honorable Brian Mast  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Mast:

You are receiving this letter because you and your staff are using an office inside a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical facility for outreach to constituents who are Veterans. This arrangement was memorialized by a permit with a stated term of November 1, 2017 to November 1, 2018, that was signed by you and the medical center Director.

The Secretary of VA has completed an internal review of Veterans Health Administration (VHA) facilities providing office space inside medical centers and clinics for Members of Congress and their staff. These spaces are provided at no cost to the Members of Congress and are in addition to and separate from the authorized local offices Members of Congress expressly use for constituent outreach and engagement.

VA medical centers and clinics are designed to provide medical care to Veterans. The delivery of that care is our primary mission and the physical spaces used are for that mission and supporting functions. Using office space for non-clinical purposes that are not under the direction or authority of VA leadership, and are for conducting Veteran engagement by non-VA employees, in this case Members of Congress and their staff, is not a use or purpose supported by the Executive in Charge of VHA.

The Secretary of VA has consulted with the Executive in Charge of VHA and examined this unique arrangement. He found that no such arrangement for use of offices exists in any other Federal hospital system, nor elsewhere in the Executive Branch. In addition, the VA Office of General Counsel has advised that such agreements are not authorized by law. Consequently, the Secretary determined that Departmental facilities currently allowing office space for non-clinical purposes are no longer to permit the use of those spaces by Members of Congress and their staff. The Secretary has directed that where any such local permission for unique access and usage has been allowed, those permissions, formal or informal agreements or understandings will cease to be in effect on December 31, 2019, and that the office spaces be prepared for use by the facility for Veterans health care and support.

Please note that of 535 Members of Congress, only six currently use VA facilities for office space for any purpose.

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The Director of the West Palm Beach VA Medical Center or their designee will contact you or your local Staff Director to provide information on the return of the designated space to full use by the facility for clinical care or support. We value our relationship with you and your staff and will continue to work closely to identify opportunities for scheduled events on VA property where you can connect with, interact, and engage constituents in a manner that meets the operational requirements of those facilities, and allows Veterans additional access to their elected representatives.

Thank you for your continued support of our Veterans and their families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Stone', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Richard A. Stone, M.D.  
Executive in Charge