

Outside the Wire

VA's New Top Watchdog

On April 19, 2016, the U.S. Senate confirmed the appointment of Michael Missal as the Department of Veterans Affairs newest Inspector General, a post left vacant for 28 months. Missal, a Washington lawyer and partner at the law firm K&L Gates, has an extensive background in government enforcement, internal investigations, and corporate governance. He previously worked as a senior counsel at the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission.



Michael J. Missal
(K&L Gates LLP)

According to Wikipedia, *“An inspector general leads an organization charged with examining the actions of a government agency, military organization, or military contractor as a general [auditor](#) of their operations to ensure they are operating in compliance with generally established policies of the government, to audit the effectiveness of security procedures, or to discover the possibility of misconduct, [waste](#), fraud, theft, or certain types of criminal activity by individuals or groups related to the agency's operation, usually involving some misuse of the organization's funds or [credit](#). In the United States, there are numerous [offices of inspector general](#) at the federal, state, and local levels”* (Wikipedia).

During his confirmation hearing in November, Missal promised, “To focus on issues of fraud and abuse but also ‘integrity at VA,’ given years of scandals and public missteps by the department” (Military Times). One of Missal’s first challenges will be determining why veterans are still facing long waits and access to VA medical care. Recently, [the Government Accountability Office's review of appointment wait times](#) found that patients new to VA health care wait three to eight weeks for medical appointments. Moreover, the report uncovered that some veterans were unable to see a primary care doctor because staff did not properly handle the appointments. CSUSB student and U.S. Army Veteran Arturo Brooks remarked about his experience trying to enroll in the VA for medical care, “I first tried to enroll through the VA’s eBenefits website and after waiting three months with no response, I finally went to the VA Loma Linda to start my eligibility process. All in all it took five months for me to see a doctor. Furthermore, I still don’t have my VA ID Card even though the staff has taken my picture twice.”

The Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Inspector General maintains a website (<http://www.va.gov/oig/>) where you can find reports on investigations concerning the VA. Through the website, you can also place a complaint about the VA by clicking on the “OIG Hotline” button or request records through the “FOIA (Freedom of Information Act) & Privacy Act Requests” button.

References

“After a Two-Year Wait, VA Gets a New Top Watchdog,”

K&L Gates LLP. *Michael J. Missal*. 2016. Biography. 20 April 2016.

Military Times. n.d. Article. 20 April 2016.

Wikipedia. n.d. Article. 20 April 2016.

