

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0910

February 6, 2012

The Hon. Eric K. Shinseki
Secretary
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue N.W.
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Mr. Secretary:

This is to urgently request your attention to the need to expedite your appointment of a Director for the Bay Pines VA Health Care System.

As you know, our previous Director at Bay Pines, Wallace Hopkins, retired last April 1st, and the hospital and healthcare system has been without a permanent director for more than 10 months. The VA announced on July 18, 2011 (press release enclosed) the appointment of Wanda Mims to serve as the new Director of Bay Pines. However, after waiting almost five months for her transfer date to Bay Pines to be assigned, she announced on December 5, 2011 (announcement enclosed) that she had asked for her appointment to be withdrawn and to remain as Director in San Juan.

The VA's own release announcing the appointment of Wanda Mims says it best about why Bay Pines needs a permanent director to guide this healthcare system in providing the best possible medical care for our nation's, our state's and our area's veterans. "Mims will oversee delivery of health care to over 97,000 Veterans and an operating budget of \$600 million at the nation's fourth largest VA Medical Center. With 3,800 staff and facilities in Palm Harbor, Bay Pines, St. Petersburg, Bradenton, Sarasota, Port Charlotte, Fort Myers, Naples, and Sebring, the Bay Pines VA Healthcare System is one of the most complex of the nation's 153 VA Medical Centers. In addition to health care services for Veterans, Bay Pines offers extensive educational programs for doctors, nurses and allied health professionals, over \$3 million in research funding, and serves as a VA Operations Center in the event of a national disaster."

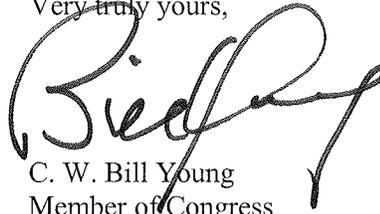
The release fails to mention that Bay Pines is also undergoing the largest series of capital improvements since the new hospital was completed in 1983. There are five construction projects already underway and four more planned for the very near future.

The staff at Bay Pines is outstanding and Ms. Kris Brown is doing a tremendous job as the Interim Director. However, there is no substitute for permanent leadership and the authority it brings with it to lead Bay Pines, its staff, and its volunteers. Too often, temporary leadership brings with it the deferral of important decisions until a permanent director comes aboard and I fear that this can create long-term problems for Bay Pines.

In the strongest possible terms, I would urge you to rectify this matter and put in place as soon as possible a good, strong Director at Bay Pines, one of our nation's most important medical facilities. Thank you for your attention to this matter and my colleagues and I on the Appropriations Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs look forward to working with you in the year ahead.

With best wishes and personal regards, I am

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Young", written in a cursive style.

C. W. Bill Young
Member of Congress

CWY:hg
Enclosures

Glenn, Harry

From: Belcher, Faith E. [Faith.Belcher2@va.gov]
Sent: Monday, July 18, 2011 3:56 PM
Subject: Bay Pines VA Announces New Healthcare System Director
Attachments: image001.wmz; oledata.mso; Mims.jpg



**Department of
Veterans Affairs**

Bay Pines VA
10,000 Bay Pines Blvd, Bay Pines, Fla. 33744
Contact: Faith Belcher
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O: 727-398-9531 or C: 727-483-2663

MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 18, 2011

Bay Pines VA Announces New Healthcare System Director

Bay Pines, Fla. – The Bay Pines VA Healthcare System is pleased to announce the appointment of Wanda Mims as its new Healthcare System Director. In this role, Mims will oversee delivery of health care to over 97,000 Veterans and an operating budget of \$600 million at the nation’s fourth largest VA Medical Center. With 3,800 staff and facilities in Palm Harbor, Bay Pines, St. Petersburg, Bradenton, Sarasota, Port Charlotte, Fort Myers, Naples, and Sebring, the Bay Pines VA Healthcare System is one of the most complex of the nation’s 153 VA Medical Centers. In addition to health care services for Veterans, Bay Pines offers extensive educational programs for doctors, nurses and allied health professionals, over \$3million in research funding, and serves as a VA Operations Center in the event of a national disaster.

Mims joined the Department of Veterans Affairs more than 14 years ago and has held progressive leadership positions at the Cincinnati, Ohio; Cleveland, Ohio; Hampton, Virginia; and Louisville,

Kentucky VA Medical Centers. She was also the Deputy Network Director for the Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 10 which included oversight for multiple VA Medical Centers in Chillicothe, Cincinnati, Cleveland, and Dayton, Ohio, and a VA Outpatient Clinic in Columbus, Ohio. Most recently, she has served since 2009 as the Director at the VA Caribbean Healthcare System in San Juan, Puerto Rico where she oversees health care operations in both Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, which includes a 480 bed main hospital, 2 Multispecialty Outpatient Clinics, 4 Community Based Outpatient Clinics, 3 Rural Health Clinics and an Outreach Center. She is responsible for a budget of almost \$500 million and a work force of 3,400. Leading this complex healthcare system is complicated not only by its physical distance from mainland U.S. but also by language barriers.

Mims enlisted in the United States Marine Corps at age 17 and served for 4 years until her discharge. She holds a Master's Degree in Business Administration (MBA), is a graduate of VA's Executive Career Field Program, Healthcare Leadership Institute, and the Federal Institute for Healthcare Executives. She has over 33 years of experience in the Federal Government. She is married to a retired Marine and has two children, one of whom served in the U.S. Army.

A transfer date has yet to be assigned for her arrival to Bay Pines, but is anticipated later this year.

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Glenn, Harry

From: Belcher, Faith E. [Faith.Belcher2@va.gov]
Sent: Monday, December 05, 2011 9:05 AM
Subject: FW: Important Message from VISN 8 Network Director

The message below was sent from the VISN 8 Network Director to our staff this morning. I wanted to pass along to you as well so that you are aware. We will continue to keep you posted and let you know when a new Director candidate is selected for Bay Pines.

From: VHABAY Postmaster
Sent: Monday, December 05, 2011 8:56 AM
To: VHABAY Exchange Users
Subject: Important Message from VISN 8 Network Director

Dear Bay Pines Staff,

I regret to inform you that Ms. Wanda Mims will remain in San Juan as the VA Caribbean Healthcare System's Director. In light of this development, I will be re-announcing and recruiting to fill the Director vacancy at Bay Pines VA Healthcare System. I am confident that we will be able to find an outstanding candidate to lead your organization. In the mean time, Kris Brown will remain appointed as Interim Director. She has done an exemplary job leading your organization during this time of transition and I'm confident that Bay Pines will continue to grow and excel under her leadership.

Sincerely,

Nevin Weaver

Network Director, VISN 8