From: Raughter, John B.
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Cc:
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Legion: Demoted VA officials actually rewarded

National commander calls continued lack of leadership accountability "disgusting."

WASHINGTON (November 25, 2015) – American Legion National Commander Dale Barnett lashed out today over continued revelations about paltry punishments issued to Department of Veterans Affairs executives who were found to have manipulated the travel and relocation bonus system to line their pockets with hundreds of thousands of dollars.

"The lack of accountability displayed by VA leadership here is disgusting," said Barnett, who leads the nation's largest wartime veterans organization. "These corrupt executives didn't face harsh consequences for their actions. They actually may have improved their economic worth."

According to the *Houston Chronicle*, former Philadelphia VA Regional Office Director Diana Rubens will take a $20,000 pay cut from her salary of over $180,000 to assume a slightly lesser VA management role in Houston. According to cost of living indicators, it takes about $120,000 a year in Houston to maintain the lifestyle of a $180,000 annual salary in Philadelphia. "She's still making out better on the deal," said Barnett, "even when you don't include the additional relocation package.

"It boggles the mind to see the level of protection VA employees have from their own wrongdoings when the very veterans they are supposed to be serving slip through the cracks, some of whom will sleep on the streets with empty bellies this Thanksgiving."

Barnett's reaction came after revelations in a *Military Times* article that Rubens and Kimberly Graves, who also was removed from her position in St. Paul, Minn., over similar actions that were exposed in a VA Inspector General's report, will receive thousands in additional relocation dollars after they were found to have manipulated the system for over $400,000 earlier, money that VA will not try to recoup as part of their punishment.

"It's crushing to see that the system still protects the wrongdoers, with seemingly impenetrable armor to shield them from responsibility while veterans are stuck outside waiting for medical appointments and suffering through an outrageous backlog just to be fairly compensated for injuries they sustained protecting America. To make matters worse, we also find out that Graves is headed to Phoenix. As if veterans in that city haven't already suffered enough after the wait-time scandal erupted in the VA health-care system there in 2014.

"VA's top management (Secretary Robert McDonald and Deputy Secretary Sloan Gibson) promised veterans that VA employees who wronged veterans would be held accountable, but cushy landing spots, still in leadership positions, at similar or even better pay when cost of living is factored in, are not even a slap on the wrist. I'm disgusted VA never fired these people, nor did it even try to recoup hundreds of thousands of dollars they manipulated out of the system. If this is the best justice we can expect, it doesn't bode well for VA's promise to win back the trust of veterans."

With a current membership of 2.2 million wartime veterans, The American Legion was founded in 1919 on the four pillars of a strong national security, veterans affairs, Americanism, and youth programs. Legionnaires work for the betterment of their communities through nearly 14,000 posts across the nation.

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