



**DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**  
**Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System**  
**11301 Wilshire Boulevard**  
**Los Angeles, CA 90073**

In Reply Refer To: 691/00

March 11, 2022

National Board of Directors  
American GI Forum of the United States  
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Pueblo, CO 81004  
[info@agifus.com](mailto:info@agifus.com)  
[giforum@agif-nvop.org](mailto:giforum@agif-nvop.org)

Dear Directors:

On Thursday, March 2, 2022, the National Commander of the American GI Forum of the United States (AFGI), Louis Vazquez-Contes, paid an unannounced visit to the VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System (GLA) West Los Angeles campus. For much of this visit he was accompanied by a group of Veteran Homeless Activists including AFGI members and non-Veterans. As the GLA Director, I agreed to a meet and greet visit with Commander Vazquez. However, upon arrival, the commander's unannounced companions gained unauthorized entry into the executive office suite with cameras set to record and livestream content to the web, causing a disruption to office operations. At my request, Commander Vazquez encouraged them to leave, after which Deputy Director Robert "Mac" McKenrick and I met with him for 30-minutes to provide a general overview of services offered to homeless Veterans.

As a follow-up to that meeting, I offered to provide a more formal, planned virtual briefing to AGIF leadership and Executive Board in the next few weeks. Mr. McKenrick agreed to, and set up, an immediate impromptu tour of GLA's Care Treatment and Rehabilitation Service initiative site -- an innovative, one-of-a-kind, location of tents and Tiny Shelters on the West LA VAMC campus where homeless Veterans may come off the street into a low barrier to entry community and receive wrap-around support services, medical care, and access to transitional and permanent supportive housing.

Following that 90-minute tour, despite being denied permission, Commander Vazquez and his entourage proceeded to gain unauthorized and unaccompanied entry into a nearby clinical and administrative building that houses Whole Health programming; Integrative Medicine; Gerofit; a Geriatric research, education & clinical center; a VA Office of Resolution Management, and the UCLA Veteran Family Wellness Center. As reported to VA Central Office, members of

West Los Angeles VA Medical Center  
11301 Wilshire Blvd.  
Los Angeles, CA 90073  
(310) 478-3711

Bakersfield Community-Based  
Outpatient Clinic  
1801 Westwind Drive  
Bakersfield, CA 93301  
(661) 632-1800

Los Angeles Ambulatory  
Care Center  
351 East Temple Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012  
(213) 253-2677

San Luis Obispo Community-Based  
Outpatient Clinic  
1288 Morro Street, Suite 200  
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401  
(805) 543-1233

Santa Barbara Community-Based  
Outpatient Clinic  
4440 Calle Real  
Santa Barbara, CA 93110  
(805) 683-1491

Santa Maria Community-Based  
Outpatient Clinic  
1550 East Main Street  
Santa Maria, CA 93454  
(805) 354-6000

Oxnard Community-Based  
Outpatient Clinic  
1690 Universe Circle  
Oxnard, CA 93033  
(805) 204-9135

Lancaster Community-Based  
Outpatient Clinic  
340 East Avenue I  
Lancaster, CA 93535  
(661) 729-8655

East Los Angeles Community-Based  
Outpatient Clinic  
5426 East Olympic Blvd., Suite 150  
Commerce, CA 90040  
(323) 725-7557

Sepulveda Ambulatory Care Center  
16111 Plummer Street  
North Hills, CA 91343  
(818) 891-7711

San Gabriel Valley Community-Based  
Outpatient Clinic  
7 West Foothill Blvd.  
Arcadia, CA 91006  
(626) 500-6881

the group aggressively engaged staff, pushed past staff, and videotaped computer screens and documents in the work areas. Staff took actions to protect patient treatment areas where patients were receiving services and patient records but were overwhelmed and intimidated by inappropriate questioning, video recording and ganging up on individual employees. There were several screen shots of computer screens with VA work being livestreamed to the internet by this group while in the building. Clinical activities were interrupted to include 1 Veteran and 2 staff leaving the area due to the intimidation. VA Police (VAPD) were dispatched to control the activities and the activists were led outside to continue their activities in an area that did not disrupt patients or employees. Commander Vazquez did nothing to prevent this appalling disruption of clinical care and administrative work and instead participated freely in this rogue, unaccompanied, and unauthorized "tour" of the building. We consider it unacceptable conduct and not in keeping with the professionalism expected of a Veteran Service Organization National Commander.

I have a legal obligation to the Veterans GLA serves to protect their private and personal health information and to maintain patient space and workplace free of harassment and intimidation. On the advice of counsel, I must take affirmative steps to prevent this from happening again. To that end, I am setting the following boundaries for AFGI's future interaction at GLA.

- AFGI is not authorized to engage at GLA in any visits that are not pre-planned through the Veteran Service Organization Liaison Office.
- AFGI is restricted to employee-escorted tours in GLA buildings where Veterans and employees are present or where sensitive records are kept.
- Video recording in patient care areas is never allowed without advanced expressed consent of the persons being recorded.
- Bullying and intimidation of employees is intolerable and VAPD will be utilized to remove persons engaged in this behavior. Please be aware those engaged in this type of behavior could face charges described in 38 C.F.R. 1.218 or may be subject to sanction under other applicable state or federal law.

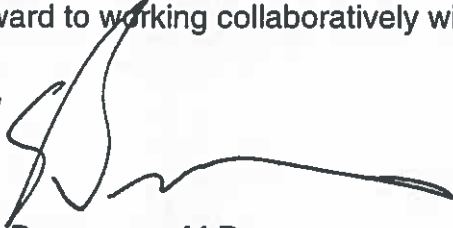
The VA highly values its relationships with Veterans Service Organizations. They provide invaluable resources including Veteran advocacy, stakeholder feedback, and community engagement that is necessary for mission success. Advanced communication and coordination of official visits is appropriate to maximize information sharing and help develop joint efforts toward mission success. Failures to that end result in missed opportunities and misunderstandings.

The Department of Veterans Affairs VSO Liaison Office, led by Mr. Raymond Kelley, is available to assist the AGIF to communicate and coordinate visits across the VA enterprise including any future visits to, or requests for, information from GLA. I have offered to provide a more

comprehensive briefing of the West Los Angeles Master Plan 2022 and our homeless Veteran services in addition to a review of GLA's healthcare operations. Please contact Mr. Kelley at [Raymond.kelley1@va.gov](mailto:Raymond.kelley1@va.gov) and the undersigned at [steven.braverman2@va.gov](mailto:steven.braverman2@va.gov) to coordinate any future visits or briefings at the national level.

I look forward to working collaboratively with you.

Sincerely,

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

Steven E. Braverman, M.D.  
Director, VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System

Cc: Raymond Kelley, Senior Advisor, VSO Liaison, Department of Veterans Affairs