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

July 14, 2011

The Honorable Eric K. Shinseki
Secretary of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Mr. Secretary,

I received the letter from your Chief of Staff dated July 8th acknowledging recent complaints alleging the censorship of religious references during veterans' funerals by staff of the Houston National Cemetery. It is disappointing to see the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) unnecessarily hide behind a Justice Department smokescreen instead of quickly addressing these complaints and getting to the bottom of the matter.

Instead of hiding behind legal obfuscation, it would not be at all difficult for the VA to conduct an immediate investigation to find out the truth, and to then take any appropriate action. If the person or persons in question did violate the rights of our veterans and their families then they should be fired. That the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign War and National Memorial Ladies felt it necessary to resort to filing a federal court complaint to address their concerns is bad enough; that the VA, through Justice Department lawyers, uses this suit to avoid resolving this complaint in a transparent and respectful manner is inexcusable. These great organizations do not need and should not have to use their scarce resources to get the government to do the right thing in a timely manner.

Mr. Secretary, like you, I have been privileged to wear the uniform of our great nation, and I greatly respect and appreciate your service to our country. I would hope that you will personally take action on this matter, overrule the Justice Department lawyers, and quickly resolve this matter for the sake of our fellow veterans and their families.

Thank you for your consideration in this critically important matter. I look forward to reviewing your response to the complaint and trust the appropriate steps will always be taken to ensure that religious freedom and our constitutional liberties are protected.

Very respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Pete Olson".

Pete Olson
Member of Congress