

**July 10, 2009**

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) -- Today, U.S. Congressman Jason Altmire (PA-04) pressed the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Inspector General (VA OIG) to launch a second, more in-depth investigation into the VA Regional Office in Pittsburgh's mishandling of veterans' benefits claims. A VA OIG report released in May 2009 found that due to a delay in the processing of veterans' benefits claims, the Pittsburgh VA's performance numbers were artificially inflated, which led to employees receiving \$300 bonuses.

**“The VA’s first investigation of the mishandling of veterans’ claims at the Pittsburgh regional office left far too many unanswered questions,” Altmire said. “I want the VA OIG to dig deeper so we can find out exactly what went wrong and what we need to do to ensure mistakes like this do not happen in the future. We owe it to our veterans to ensure that they receive the benefits they have earned as quickly as possible.”**

The VA OIG's first report simply stated that a “misunderstanding” between management and staff led to a delay in the processing of veterans' claims. To press the VA OIG to further examine what went wrong, Altmire and Congressman Chet Edwards (TX-17), Chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, held a formal discussion on the House floor today underscoring the need for an additional investigation. During their discussion, Altmire urged the VA OIG to use part of the \$19 million increase in funding they are receiving in the FY 2010 Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations bill to examine this issue. You can watch video of their discussion by clicking [here](#).

The House later passed the FY 2010 Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations bill by a vote of 415-3.

Altmire's comments are now a part of the official guidance that the VA OIG will use to determine how Congress intends for the agency to spend its FY2010 budget. Therefore, because of Altmire's actions, it is more likely that the VA OIG will carry out a second investigation.

On June 5, Altmire also joined with Senators Arlen Specter (D-PA) and Bob Casey (D-PA) and Representatives Tim Murphy (PA-18) and Mike Doyle (PA-14) and sent a letter to the Government Accountability Office asking them to investigate the Pittsburgh VA Regional Offices' handling of veterans' benefits claims.