



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on July 28, 2016

Report Reveals VA Spent Millions on Art While Veterans Died Awaiting Care

An oversight report by an independent taxpayer watchdog into the Veterans Affairs administration reveals more troubling information connected to the VA scandal, Fox News reports. According to the report's findings, the VA spent \$20 million on artwork and sculptures and added nearly 40,000 new jobs, though just one in 11 were medical positions, all while more than a thousand veterans died awaiting medical care.



In 2014, the Veterans Administration became the subject of significant controversy after reports exposed that the Phoenix facility had been altering its scheduling books and that at least 40 veterans had died while awaiting care. Reports later revealed similar issues with lengthy waiting times in at least 10 states. Investigation into the Veterans Affairs wait-time scandal has revealed a number of startling revelations, including evidence of fraud and regulatory violations related to scheduling issues at over 50 VA medical facilities.

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Multiple investigations ultimately found that more than 1,000 veterans have died while waiting to be seen by a doctor, and employees who dared to blow the whistle on conditions at the facilities have received retaliation while many of those responsible have virtually avoided punishment.

And just when it seems that the VA scandal has been fully explored and exposed, more disturbing revelations appear.

An oversight report by taxpayer watchdog group Open the Books and COX Media Washington, D.C., entitled "[The VA Scandal Two Years Later](#)," reveals that while veterans had been waiting for care and facilities were altering its scheduling books to cover up the lengthy waiting lists, the VA was instead utilizing millions of dollars in financial resources to improve the artistic ambiance of its facilities, among other things.

The seven-page report is based on data obtained through Freedom of Information requests and examines the spending that took place at the VA during the same time period in which the VA has been accused of doctoring patient waiting times and allowing veterans to perish while they awaited care. The report reveals that an exorbitant amount of money was spent on artwork and sculptures, including at facilities wherein the patients were blind.

In an editorial for *Forbes*, Adam Andrzejewski, founder and CEO of Open the Books, draws attention to the report's findings:

In the now-infamous VA scandal of 2012-2015, the nation was appalled to learn that 1,000 veterans died while waiting to see a doctor. Tragically, many calls to the suicide assistance hotline were answered by voicemail. The health claim appeals process was known as "the hamster wheel" and



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the appointment books were cooked in seven of every ten clinics.

Yet, in the midst of these horrific failings the VA managed to spend \$20 million on high-end art over the last ten years — with \$16 million spent during the Obama years.

Items purchased by the VA included two sculptures costing \$670,000, which were placed at the new Palo Alto Polytrauma and Blind Rehabilitation Center (shown).

“Blind veterans can’t see fancy sculptures, and all veterans would be happier if they could just see a doctor,” Andrzejewski opines.

The report primarily underscores that whatever the reason for the lengthy waiting times at VA facilities, it appears that it is not because of a lack of money.

The VA has in the past defended many purchases of art as being part of “healing gardens” to help soothe wounded soldiers to make them feel comfortable and heal.

The oversight report notes that during the same period of time on which the scandal is focused, nearly \$100 billion in salaries and bonuses were paid out to just over 350,000 VA employees. Furthermore, the report found that between 2012 and 2015, the VA added 39,454 new positions to its payroll, of which just one in 11 were “medical officers,” also known as doctors.

Meanwhile, despite the attention that the scandal has received, 500,000 veterans remain on waiting lists for appointments.

Sadly, though the report was published in May of this year, it is only now getting some limited media attention.



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