

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 1, 2010

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

Dear Secretary Shinseki:

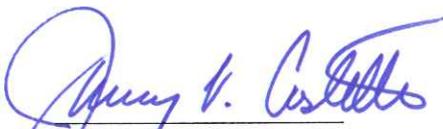
We write to you extremely concerned and alarmed about the potential exposure of our veteran constituents to HIV, Hepatitis B and C or other blood-borne diseases from dental care received at the St. Louis Medical Center in Missouri.

This week, nearly 500 of our constituents received letters that they may be infected with HIV, the Hepatitis B and C viruses or other blood-borne diseases from items used during dental treatment. An inspection by the National Infectious Diseases Program Office (IDPO) found that the facility was not following standard operating procedures for sterilization, disinfection and cleaning of medical equipment. Disregarding these guidelines may have jeopardized the health of veteran patients and undoubtedly will erode their trust in the VA system.

We ask that you immediately investigate the actions that led to this gross negligence and take steps to ensure patient safety standards are upheld at all Veterans Administration (VA) facilities and for dealing with infected patients. We also urge you to strengthen VA oversight of sterilization practices and enhance regulations to protect veterans from infection and to reduce the chance of this happening again and provide us with the IDPO inspection report.

Our veterans have risked their lives to defend our nation and deserve the best possible care.

Sincerely,


JERRY COSTELLO
Member of Congress


PHIL HARE
Member of Congress


JOHN SHIMKUS
Member of Congress