

Fellow Board Members:

I am writing to ask each of you to join me in reflecting on how we can do better for the people we serve: Our state's veterans and their families. You know that I always ask you as board members to do your homework, study the facts, ask hard questions and have open and productive debates. But after last week's meeting, I do not believe we as a body lived up to that goal.

Governor Ivey personally attended our meeting and, after praising our work, reminded us that we are all part of one team in the executive branch of state government. How did we respond? By publicly rejecting her conclusion without considering any input from any other State Agencies about Commissioner Davis's handling of the ARPA grant program and by publicly questioning the private resolution that Governor Ivey had reached with Commissioner Davis to save us all from this continued conflict. I cannot imagine anyone outside the Veteran community thinks we are acting as a team with the Governor right now.

In truth Commissioner Davis along with a few others in the Veteran community orchestrated the outcome of votes by placing extreme pressure on some of you to do and say things that went against your beliefs and the very principles on which this board should stand. Regardless of whether we all still agree with how these votes came out, we can all agree that Commissioner Davis's actions leading up to them went against his public statement last month that his resignation would resolve this matter to the mutual benefit of all parties. I gave him a clear opportunity during the board meeting to reaffirm his resignation and put this all behind us, but he failed to do so.

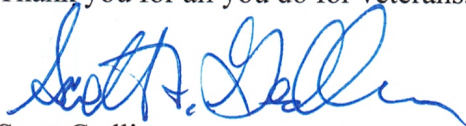
I stand by my word when I said that Commissioner Davis has done some really good things as commissioner, and I will always be grateful for these accomplishments. However, today, I believe that he has manipulated me and the Board to keep his job and serve his own interests. I also now believe that his actions have brought the Board itself into disfavor with the Governor and Legislature—elected officials we must always have on our side if we are going to serve our mission. For this reason, I am convinced that Commissioner Davis must step aside. I hope you will join me in urging him to do so.

Resolving this distraction is the only way we can get back to serving Alabama veterans. I was reminded just how important our mission is when one of my fellow VFW members approached me over the weekend about a homeless veteran he was personally helping. He asked me where he should go next to get the veteran temporary shelter and food, but I only had a few of the answers he needed. We should all have those answers, and we should develop a good network of all the services, agencies, and organizations that could have helped this veteran. Instead, our Board is spending its valuable time on one man's quest to save his position and standing in our community.

I believe Governor Ivey wants to do everything we can as a state to best serve our veterans, just as each of us do. No doubt we have accomplished a great deal for veterans and the military community in Alabama, but we will continue these accomplishments only when we all work together, including with our elected leaders, state agencies and other organizations.

In closing, I would like to acknowledge that we are all challenged in this life, but everything is part of God's plan. I believe we will be able to close this chapter and move forward together as a team.

Thank you for all you do for veterans.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Scott Gedling". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Scott" and last name "Gedling" clearly distinguishable.

Scott Gedling

Vice-Chairman, Alabama State Board of Veterans Affairs