



NEWS RELEASE

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Vigorous Investigation, Corrective Action Can Restore Confidence in VA; Underlying Access Problems Stem from a Decade of Under Funding

WASHINGTON—DAV (Disabled American Veterans) told the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee today that the organization is gravely concerned about allegations of potential wrongdoing by some Department of Veterans Affairs employees or management, but that the access issues underlying these incidents come after a decade in which VA's medical care and infrastructure were underfunded by more than \$15 billion.

"No one takes these allegations more seriously than DAV, whose 1.2 million members rely heavily on VA for some or all of their health care needs. We strongly support the ongoing investigations and will demand full accountability for anyone found to have broken laws or violated VA's rules and policies," said DAV Washington Headquarters Executive Director Garry Augustine. "However, we continue to have confidence that VA under the leadership of Secretary Shinseki can and will take the actions necessary to address these issues and restore the trust of America's veterans," he said.

"The biggest challenge facing VA, and the root cause of the problems relating to waiting lists being reported almost daily, stem from the inability of VA to provide timely access to care," Augustine said. "If you don't have enough doctors, or enough space, or the separate funding required to purchase care outside VA, then there is no alternative to forcing veterans to wait for care, and that is simply unacceptable," Augustine said.

National Legislative Director Joseph Violante who is delivering DAV's testimony to the Senate Committee said that, "Secretary Shinseki has a track record of directly and honestly confronting problems and working with Congress and stakeholders to correct them."

"We continue to believe that VA provides high-quality health care for the vast majority of veterans treated each year, and that veterans will be better served now and in the future by a robust VA health care system rather than by any other model of care," said Violante. "The challenge facing VA, and the root cause of the problems being reported, have to do with access to care rather than the quality of care delivered," he said.

"DAV also believes that whenever an enrolled veteran is unable to receive care directly from VA within established timeframes, VA must take responsibility to find alternative means to provide and coordinate such care," Violante said. But, he said, "simply giving a veteran a plastic card and wishing them good luck in the private sector is no substitute for a fully coordinated system of health care."

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About DAV

DAV empowers veterans to lead high-quality lives with respect and dignity. It is dedicated to a single purpose: fulfilling our promises to the men and women who served. DAV does this by ensuring that veterans and their families can access the full range of benefits available to them; fighting for the interests of America's injured heroes on Capitol Hill; and educating the public about the great sacrifices and needs of veterans transitioning back to civilian life. DAV, a non-profit organization with 1.2 million members, was founded in 1920 and chartered by the U. S. Congress in 1932. Learn more at www.dav.org.