



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

News Release

Office of Public Affairs
Media Relations

Washington, DC 20420
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 27, 2017

President Donald J. Trump Visits VA, Signs VA accountability executive order, Secretary Shulkin makes new key announcements

Today President Donald J. Trump visited the Department of Veterans Affairs to thank Veterans for their service, and VA employees for their work helping Veterans.

While at the VA, the President signed an Executive Order entitled, “Improving Accountability and Whistleblower Protection at the Department of Veterans Affairs,” and Secretary Shulkin made three new key announcements at the VA’s Central Office.

The Executive Order is focused on improving “accountability and whistleblower protection” at the VA by creating an office dedicated to that purpose and the position of Special Assistant to the Secretary who will report directly to the Secretary and serve as executive director of the office.

The new executive director “will report directly to me as Secretary so that we can identify barriers that are preventing us from removing employees and people that we have identified that should no longer be working at VA,” said Dr. David Shulkin, Secretary of Veterans Affairs. “We want make sure that we have employees who work hard and are committed to the mission of serving our Veterans.”

The VA will establish the office and appoint the executive director within 45 days of the signing of the Executive Order.

The executive director will advise and assist the Secretary in using all available authorities to discipline or terminate any VA manager or employee who has violated the public’s trust and failed to carry out his or her duties on behalf of Veterans. The executive director will also assist the Secretary in recruiting, rewarding, and retaining high-performing employees.

At the signing ceremony for the Executive Order, Secretary Shulkin also announced three new key initiatives at the Department.

VA Partnership with the Department of Health and Human Services

Effective today, VA is entering a partnership agreement with the Department of Health and Human Services that will allow the assignment of medical professionals from the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps to provide direct patient care to Veterans in VA hospitals and clinics in underserved communities.

“My priority has been to improve access to care for our nation’s heroes,” said Dr. David J. Shulkin, Secretary of Veterans Affairs. “By partnering with our colleagues at HHS, we will enhance the availability of clinical care in those areas most in need.”

The initial agreement enables up to 20 officers from the Commissioned Corps to treat Veterans in VA facilities that are most in need of staffing support. The agreement also allows up to 10 more officers to help support coordination for veterans receiving non-VA community care.

New Fraud, Waste and Abuse Taskforce

The Secretary announced a major new initiative to detect and prevent fraud, waste and abuse in the Department of Veterans Affairs. Effective today, this initiative has the potential to save tens of millions of taxpayer dollars currently at risk, for fraud, waste and abuse that can be redirected to better serve Veterans.

The initiative will include bringing in the leading thinkers from the private sector and other government organizations in an advisory committee to identify and leverage cutting-edge fraud detection tools and; and coordinate all fraud, waste and abuse detection and reporting activities across the Department through a single office.

The Department has identified potential savings in the area of improper payments to health care providers, major contracts, contracts for pharmaceuticals, and the delivery of benefits to Veterans.

“Restoring the trust of Veterans and improving system-wide accountability are among my top priorities. It’s essential to ensure that all our employees and the companies that we do business with are being good stewards of the resources available to care for our Veterans,” said Dr. Shulkin.

Removing Red Tape at State-owned Veteran Nursing Homes

Effective today, VA is amending guidelines to allow state-owned Veteran nursing homes to follow state guidelines in the construction design of their facilities - removing red tape, while increasing access to services for Veterans.

Up to now, to qualify for federal grant funding for Veteran nursing homes in their state, Governors and state officials have had to follow federal construction design guidelines. With today’s announcement by the Secretary, that is no longer the case, and Governors are freed up to

follow their own state guidelines in the construction design of these facilities while still qualifying for the same level of federal grant funding as before.

In announcing the move, Secretary Shulkin noted that State design guidelines already are sufficient to the task of providing safe conditions for our Veterans and the Department recognizes the need to move quickly to reduce unnecessary barriers to providing much needed services to our Veterans.

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