Caring for Veterans: A Higher Calling

Secretary of Veterans Affairs
Robert A. McDonald
Lincoln’s Charge, 1865 ~
“To care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and his orphan.”

Today ~ To care for those “who shall have borne the battle,” and for their families and their survivors.

The best, most inspiring mission and greatest clients of any health care system in the world.
Our Values

- **Integrity**
- **Commitment**
- **Advocacy**
- **Respect**
- **Excellence**
VA Administrations

• **Veterans Health Administration (VHA)**  
  • Health care for almost 9 million enrolled Veterans

• **Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA)**  
  • Administers benefits (disability, pension, education, insurance, loans, rehabilitation)

• **National Cemetery Administration (NCA)**  
  • Honors Veterans & families with final resting places & commemorates their service and sacrifice.
• $47 billion+ Post-9/11 GI Bill education benefits to 1.3 million Veterans and eligible family members (since inception 2009).

• $1.1 billion vocational rehabilitation & employment benefits to 99,000+ disabled Veterans (FY 2014).

• Life insurance for 6.5 million Veterans, Servicemembers, and families.

• 2.1 million home loans; 440,000 totaling $100 billion in FY 2014; helped 80,000+ Veterans avoid foreclosure last year (lowest foreclosure rate in the industry last 25 consecutive quarters).

• $58 billion+ compensation benefits for ~3.9 million Veterans, ~420,000 rated 100% disabled (FY2014). Forecast $66 billion for 4.2 million Veterans FY 2015.

• Completed 1.3 million FY 2014 claims, ~150,000 more than FY2013’s record setting year (1.2 million completed).

• Claims backlog down 64% the last 24 months—611,000 to 215,000.
Almost **9 million** Veterans are enrolled for VA health care — from the 90-year-old Veteran of **WW II**, to the 80-year-old Veteran of **Korea**, the 60-year-old Veteran of **Vietnam**, the 40-year-old Veteran of the **Persian Gulf**, and the 20-year-old Veteran of **Iraq and Afghanistan**.
Facilities

• 150 VA Medical Centers
• 819 Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs)
• 300 Vet Centers (Readjustment Counseling), 135 Community Living Centers, 104 Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Programs

• Outreach and mobile medical clinics to serve the most remote Veterans — all tethered to one of our medical centers
Why VA Health Care

A triad of unique capabilities

Caring for Veterans

Research

Education

Clinical Care
Groundbreaking Research

• 3 Nobel Prizes and 7 Lasker Awards

• Groundbreaking research into PTSD, Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), and the use of telehealth and personal-assistance technology, including iPads, to deliver care better

• Pioneered the use of electronic health records and bar-code software for administering medications.

• Developed the implantable cardiac pacemaker, conducted the first successful liver transplants, and created the nicotine patch to help smokers quit smoking

• Partnered with DARPA to design artificial limbs that respond to thoughts of paralyzed patients — a system called “Braingate,” featured by 60 Minutes in 2012
Education & Training

• Partners with over 1,800 educational institutions & organizations on hundreds of initiatives & research projects.

• Each year, VA trains ~120,000 health-care workers — 62,000 medical students and residents, 23,000 nursing students, 33,000 students in other health fields.

• An estimated 70% of all U.S. doctors have trained with VA.

80 facilities partner with law schools, legal clinics, and firms training of Veterans legal advocates and public policy experts.
Clinical Care & People

- **240,000 episodes of care each day** — more than 90 million scheduled appointments in 2013 alone.
- VA receives **higher satisfaction** ratings from Veterans for inpatient and outpatient care than private hospitals receive from their patients.
- **340,000 employees** — one-third of whom are Veterans.
- Largest employer of nurses in the Nation.

We need the best people to join us in fulfilling our historic mission — caring for those who “shall have borne the battle.”
VA hospitals are a national leader in reducing MRSA infections — down 68.6% since 2007, compared to 30% for non-VA hospitals.

2014 John B. Barnwell Award recipient: Dr. Michael Oxman, San Diego Health Care System, for leadership in VA’s Shingles Prevention Cooperative Study.

2014 Service to America Medal recipients: Dr. William A. Bauman, M.D., and Dr. Ann M. Spungen, Ph.D., National Center of Excellence for the Medical Consequences of Spinal Cord Injury, VA Medical Center, Bronx, New York.

2014 Paralyzed Veterans of America Clinical Advocacy Award: Dr. Beth Taylor, Office of Nursing Services, for leadership in Spinal Cord Injury Patient Unit staffing models.

2014 Thomas L. Petty Distinguished Pulmonary Scholar Award: Dr. Eileen Collins, Texas Valley Coastal Bend Health Care System, for significant advances in the field of pulmonary rehabilitation.
Progress on Access

• 37 million appointments — **1.8 million more** than in the same months last year (May-Dec).
  
  • 98% completed within 30 days of preferred or medically necessary date.
  
  • 880,000 during extended clinic hours on nights and weekends.
  
• 2 million authorizations for private-sector care — nearly **45% more** than in the same months last year (May-Jan).

• Electronic Wait List shrank from over 57,000 appointments to under 25,800 — a **56% reduction** (May-Jan).

• Increased recruiting and hiring — 836 more physicians, 1,856 more nurses, and 1,266 more support & scheduling staff (Apr-Dec).
Incentives for Employment

We’re working hard to help you work hard.

• Education **debt reduction** up to $120,000 over 5 years for health care professionals.

• Student **loan repayment** up to $10,000 per year, with a lifetime cap of $60,000.

• Employee **scholarships** incentivize degrees or training in select areas of health care, covering tuition & related expenses for a service obligation.

• Comprehensive **pay & compensation** packages commensurate with education, clinical experience, and market.

• Recruitment, relocation, and retention **incentives** to increase clinical providers for rural and highly rural hospitals and clinics.

• Salary range increased to make us more **competitive** with other employers.

• Pilot program for **loan repayment** for students in psychiatry, funded by the 2014 **Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans Act**.
Objectives

1. Improving the Veteran experience to be seamless, integrated, and responsive
2. Improving the employee experience, focusing on people and culture to better serve Veterans
3. Improving our internal support services
4. Establishing a culture of continuous improvement
5. Enhancing strategic partnerships
What is myVA?

• It’s about putting the Veteran’s interest first.

• It’s about empowering employees and helping them deliver excellent customer service to improve the Veteran experience.

• It’s about improving or eliminating processes that impede good customer service.

• It’s about rethinking our internal structures and processes to become more Veteran-centric and productive.
Organizational Realignment

- Five regions facilitating delivery of services across the nine business lines of operations
- More effective customer-service training & capabilities across VA

A new, unified organizational framework
Strategic Partnerships

• New national network of Community Veteran Advisory Councils (CVACs)
• Evaluation & benchmarking of existing partnerships
• “Gap analysis” to identify areas not covered by available services
Let’s talk about it

The best, most inspiring mission — the greatest clients in the world.