

DAV Response to Senator Richard Burr's "Open Letter" to Veterans

DAV is outraged that [North Carolina Senator Richard Burr](#) chose the eve of Memorial Day – a sacred time to remember and honor those who paid the ultimate sacrifice for our nation – to attack the patriotism of leaders of most of the nation's leading veterans service organizations.

Last week at a hearing of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, DAV and other veterans service organizations offered comprehensive testimony on the underlying causes of the waiting list problems afflicting VA health care facilities that are currently under investigation. In addition to demanding full accountability for any VA employee found to have violated VA rules, regulations or laws, we provided detailed analysis and forward-looking recommendations to address the root cause of waiting lists: lack of access and capacity to treat all veterans seeking care.

Although Senator Burr attended much of that hearing, apparently all he wanted to hear were calls for the VA Secretary to resign. Senator Burr may be enamored with the idea that all of VA's problems and challenges can be overcome by replacing one Secretary, but the plain facts and simple logic dictate otherwise. If Senator Burr believes that calling for the resignation of Secretary Shinseki is the only measure of whether a leader cares about veterans, perhaps he should check with Speaker Boehner, Chairman Miller and the vast majority of Republican Senators who have not done so.

Regrettably, Senator Burr shows no interest in pursuing serious policy solutions, preferring instead to launch cheap political attacks on the integrity of leaders of veterans

organizations who do not agree with him, all of whom served honorably to defend this nation and then devoted all or most of their lives to serving their fellow veterans.

In spite of Senator Burr's attacks, we will continue to call for an open and comprehensive investigation of Phoenix and at any other VA facility where wrongdoings are alleged. While Senator Burr challenges our integrity, we will continue to demand full accountability for all who violated the public trust, regardless of who or where they are, including criminal prosecutions if warranted. While Senator Burr ignores VA's real challenges, we will continue to call for an independent review not only of VA's waiting list and scheduling problems, but the access and capacity deficits that created them.

History clearly shows that unless VA receives sufficient resources to hire enough doctors and nurses, and has enough physical space to treat veterans, waiting list problems will continue. Over the past decade, DAV – along with many of our veterans service organizations – pointed out that the VA has received more than \$17 billion less than was needed, a figure that was derived primarily from VA's own internal analysis. Although these facts have been clear to successive Administrations and Congresses – including Senator Burr – none took the actions necessary to provide VA the resources it required.

Rather than be distracted by Senator Burr's hollow insults, we will continue to reach out to thoughtful Republicans and Democrats in the Senate and House, as well as the President and leaders in VA, to join us in taking an honest look at all the facts, discuss with us all possible remedies and reforms, and work with us to implement solutions that truly honor the heroism of the men and women we remember this Memorial Day weekend.