

President Trump Signs Law That Improves Veterans' Health Care

Wednesday afternoon, with a number of veterans at his side, President Donald Trump signed into law the Veterans Choice Program Extension and Improvement Act.

Before signing the bill into law, the president made the following comments:

We're honored to join and be joined today by some absolutely tremendous people and great veterans. Thanks, as well—and I have to thank them dearly—but as well to Representative Phil Roe. Where is he? What a job you've done. And all the members of Congress who worked on the bill that we're about to sign. Such an important bill.

I especially want to thank Senator John McCain and Senator Johnny Isaacson. They have been incredible in working with us. Let me also welcome my good friend, Florida Governor Rick Scott, a Navy veteran who's here with us to represent more than a million veterans from the state of Florida. We're also joined by the leaders of a number of veterans' groups. I want to thank all of them for being here and all of the tremendous and important work that they do. We would not be here if it weren't for them, I can tell you that.

Finally, I want to thank our Secretary of the VA, David Shulkin, who, by the way, was approved with a vote of 100 to nothing. That's shocking, right? One hundred to nothing, really. Now, you wouldn't be getting 100 to nothing.

We met earlier today in the Oval Office, and Secretary Shulkin updated me on the massive and chronic challenge he inherited at the VA, but also the great progress that he is

making. He's got a group of people that are phenomenal at the VA. It's one of my most important things. I've been telling all of our friends at speeches and rallies for two years about the VA, how we're going to turn it around. And we're doing that.

And, actually, next week, on Thursday at 2 o'clock, we're going to have a news conference with David and some others to tell you about all of the tremendous things that are happening at the VA and what we've done in terms of progress and achievement.

The veterans have poured out their sweat and blood and tears for this country for so long, and it's time that they're recognized, and it's time that we now take care of them, and take care of them properly.

That's why I'm pleased today to sign into law the Veterans Choice Program Improvement Act. So this is called the Choice Program Improvement Act. It speaks for itself. This bill will extend and improve the Veterans Choice Program so that more veterans can see the doctor of their choice—you got it? The doctor of their choice—and don't have to wait and travel long distances for VA care. Some people have to travel five hours, eight hours, and they'll have to do it on a weekly basis and even worse than that. It's not going to happen anymore.

This new law is a good start, but there is still much work to do. We will fight each and every day to deliver the long-awaited reforms our veterans deserve, and to protect those who have so courageously protected each and every one of us.

So we've made a lot of strides for the veterans. These are, like, the most incredible people we have in our country as far as I'm concerned, and they have not been taken care of properly.

I want to thank David. You've done an incredible job. And you're going to see some of that on Thursday. So thank you all very much.

After the bill was signed, the president and Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. David Shulkin briefly discussed they would be holding a press conference next Thursday at approximately 2 p.m. EDT to discuss the many other improvements that are happening within the VA.

The president was also joined by Florida Gov. Rick Scott, who is also a veteran. He shared the following comments after the bill signing was completed:

My father was in the 82nd Airborne, he did all the combat jumps, and I grew up listening to all his stories about the war. I had the opportunity to serve in the Navy. Unfortunately, in 2014, I had to sue the VA because we had—our state health care agency couldn't go inspect their hospitals when we heard all the stories about deaths, delays and poor conditions.

And so Mr. President and I want to thank Congress for doing this to create certainty of care while we figure out how to fix the VA system. And David, I want to thank you for what you're doing. You've got actually the right background to do this. I know President Trump has been focused on our veterans and our military before he was president, and I know he's going to continue to do a great job. We have 1.5 million veterans. I want them all to move to Florida. But thank you for doing this, Mr. President. {eo}