

Ian Smith & Buzz Davis: VA healthcare hit with one-two punch! Veterans and unions fight back

Posted on Friday, Jun 21, 2019

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First vets were hit with the massive privatization program called Choice passed by the Republican Congress in 2014 and signed by Pres. Obama. But 70 House Democrats thought the Choice program was NOT the way to improve VA veteran healthcare. They voted NO.

The second punch was President Trump's hitting unionized VA workers with a "bad faith" proposed bargaining contract to replace the present contract covering 260,000 VA workers. The American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) union members are more than half the VA's 460,000 workers and one-third are veterans.

Trump & VA Top Management Follow the Koch Brothers Plan to Privatize Veterans Healthcare

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In 2010, the Koch brothers, two of the world's wealthiest men, decided they wanted to close down the VA, send all seven million veterans who use the VA for healthcare, into private care, and sell VA hospitals. They have spent hundreds of millions to have Congress do this. Private healthcare costs about 30% more than VA care and produces tremendous profits for insurance, drug and hospital corporations. The Koch's and Wall-Streeters intend to make billions off sick vets.

They want to destroy the VA - America's only Single Payer/Single Provider

healthcare system to ensure America will NOT enact Single Payer healthcare in the future.

Republican's designed the VA Choice program to massively privatize the VA - pushing vets out of VA care into private care.

By the end of 2017, more than 40% of all VA outpatient appointments had been pushed into the private sector. We believe that today, 1.5 years later, this percentage is even higher.

On June sixth, VA management kicked off the reorganized Community Care Program (CCP). Republicans designed this program under the MISSION Act of 2018 to send more veterans into private care.

In March, over 50 Democratic Congressional members signed a letter asking the VA to slow down, postpone the introduction of CCP until it is fully tested and until dollar costs are known, budgeted for and until the current unsatisfactory regulatory proposal is rewritten.

President Trump and VA Secretary Robert Wilkie refused to work with Congress and veterans groups on Democratic concerns.

These very important new CCP federal regulations were written in secret without the input from Congressional VA committees and veteran service organizations like Veterans of Foreign Wars or Disabled American Veterans. The regs were hurriedly presented to the public for comment, poorly written, are possibly illegal and include cost estimates off by billions of dollars. These regs endanger veterans' health, provide care without proper supervision by a VA primary physician and do not guarantee private care quality will match that of VA care.

The health of millions of veterans is at risk.

Over 7.2 million vets use VA healthcare (an increase of 85% since 2001.) Nearly half are combat vets with serious physical, mental and emotional wounds/injuries and diseases. Many are low income. Many are disabled.

In surveys, 92% of America's vets say they want the VA fixed and do NOT want private care. Vets want care from their VA doctors and nurses. Vets need the VA's high quality specialized expertise.

Trump Presents “BAD” Faith Bargaining Proposal to AFGE Union

Now Wisconsin's 7,600 VA workers in Milwaukee, Madison and Tomah and across America have received the second punch from Trump.

VA management's proposed labor contract guts worker rights and even prevents medical staff from reporting serious medical errors or threats. Trump proposes that a disciplined worker would be prohibited from filing a grievance against an unjust disciplinary action.

AFGE locals across America continue organizing rallies, press conferences and town halls helping workers, veterans and citizens understand what is happening at the VA.

The Madison VA union and Veterans for Peace will hold an informational rally Monday, June 24th from 11-1PM at the VA Main Gate on Highland just north of Campus Drive. We invite the public to join us in showing support for veterans and VA workers. Press conference starts at 11 AM.

To help veterans, please call your U.S. senators and representative. Just say Stop Privatizing the VA — fix, fund, staff it, and fill the 50,000 VA vacancies!

-Ian Smith, of Madison, was an Army medic during the 1950's, is a retired 40 year VA worker, is presently a vice president of AFGE (Am. Fed. of Govt. Employees) Local 1732, Madison VA union and has been working with Davis to stop va privatization since 2014.

-Buzz Davis, formerly of Stoughton, WI now of Tucson, is a long time progressive activist, a member of Veterans for Peace and a former VISTA volunteer, Army officer during the 1960's, elected official, union organizer, retired state government planner, presently helping to lead the 26 state VFP effort to stop VA privatization.