

Duckworth applauds passage of VA Accountability & Whistleblowers Protection Act

June 7 2017 8:11 AM



WASHINGTON, DC – U.S. Senator and former Assistant Secretary of Veterans Affairs Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) released the following statement applauding today's Senate's passage of bipartisan legislation she co-sponsored to reform the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) by strengthening protections for whistleblowers against retaliation and making it easier to dismiss employees who are negligent in their care for Veterans and are performing poorly. Senator Duckworth is a combat Veteran who served 23 years in the Reserve Forces and still receives her own healthcare through VA.

“The men and women who have worn the uniform of this great nation and risked life and limb to defend us deserve nothing but the best,” said Duckworth. **“While the vast majority of VA’s employees—including many who are Veterans themselves—are dedicated to ensuring our warriors receive the best care and services, it is clear that we can do better. This legislation will hold bad actors to account and create critically important protections for whistleblowers so employees can shine a light on problems at VA without fear of retaliation.”**

The legislation, which is supported by a number of Veterans advocacy and government accountability organizations, would strengthen important whistleblower protections, establish in law the VA’s newly created Office of Accountability and Whistleblower Protection, require the VA to rate supervisors on how they protect whistleblowers, and require the VA to provide annual department-wide training on how to handle whistleblower complaints. It would also make it easier to remove employees and senior executives who are negligent in their care for Veterans. A one-page summary of the legislation can be found [here](#).

After being wounded in combat, Duckworth devoted her life to serving her fellow Veterans and servicemembers. She served in the Reserve Forces for 23 years, as the Secretary of the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs and the Assistant Secretary for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs in Washington. As a Senator, Duckworth has introduced legislation to [improve Veterans’ access to preventive healthcare](#) and has been a vocal critic of efforts to [make Veterans healthcare more expensive](#) and to end programs that are reducing [Veteran homelessness](#). As a Congresswoman, she was supportive of previous efforts to reform VA like the Choice Act in 2014 and she coauthored the bipartisan Clay Hunt SAV Act, which passed both the House and Senate unanimously and was signed into law to improve mental health care services for Veterans and reduce Veteran suicide. She also introduced the bipartisan Troop Talent Act—large portions of which are now law—to help servicemembers transition to civilian life by making it easier for them to turn the skills they learned in the military into the credentials and licenses needed for similar civilian fields.

