

# **Duckworth, Durbin to Rauner: Where's your plan for IVH Quincy**

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WASHINGTON – Following Illinois Governor Bruce Rauner's press conference on January 10, 2018, where he stated that his new goal for the Illinois Veterans' Home (IVH) Quincy was to reach "zero instances of Legionella infection," U.S. Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) today pressed Gov. Rauner for a copy of his Administration's plan of action to reach his stated goal.



"This goal, and the need for a detailed plan of action, is critical and long overdue given the multiple outbreaks of Legionnaires' disease at IVH Quincy that have sickened more than 60 residents and killed 13 over the past three years. We are writing to request a copy of your targeted, specific plan of action for IVH Quincy," Durbin and Duckworth wrote in a letter to Gov. Rauner.

In the letter, Durbin and Duckworth also called for Gov. Rauner to immediately implement all recommendations made by the Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention (CDC) over the past few years to mitigate Legionella infection and to commit to informing the public, in a more timely fashion, of any additional cases. They also reiterated their request that Gov. Rauner conduct a review of Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs (IDVA) and Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) leadership, as they remain troubled that Rauner's Administration has failed to adequately mitigate and prevent Legionnaires' outbreaks in an immediate and transparent fashion.

At the request of Senators Durbin and Duckworth in early December, the U.S. Government Accountability Office is conducting a review of Department of Veterans' Affairs oversight of nursing home care across the country, including state veterans' homes such as Quincy.

Full text of the letter is available below:

Dear Governor Rauner:

On January 10, 2018, you stated that your new goal for the Illinois Veterans' Home (IVH) Quincy was to reach "zero instances of Legionella infection." This goal, and the need for a detailed plan of action, is critical and long overdue given the multiple outbreaks of Legionnaires' disease at IVH Quincy that have sickened more than 60 residents and killed 13 over the past three years. We are writing to request a copy of your targeted, specific plan of action for IVH Quincy.

Following your week-long stay at IVH Quincy, you finally called last week for the need to appropriately and immediately address the challenges and needs at the Home. You noted in your press conference four key issues as part of a rough outline—issues that have been raised many times over since the first outbreak in 2015, which a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) official called an "epidemic" at the Illinois General Assembly's joint hearing on IVH Quincy on January 9. You called for regular reviews of water treatment protocols, investments in the water infrastructure, improvements in the local water source, and upgrades to resident buildings and rooms or even new construction. However, we—and the Veterans of IVH Quincy and their families who have been waiting patiently for three years now—have yet to see a specific plan of action.

You are well aware that, despite the fact that IVH Quincy is owned, operated, and managed by the state, the federal government provides significant financial assistance to State Veterans Homes, in addition to contributions from the State. The Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs (IDVA) has received federal funding for IVH Quincy through the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) State Home Per Diem Program. The federal government also has reimbursed the state for 65 percent of the costs associated with approved construction and acquisition costs. Further, we understand the VA is due

to award more than \$4 million to support the State's \$6.4 million investment to upgrade the water treatment infrastructure at IVH Quincy. The federal government is more than willing to invest where investments are needed. However, in order to justify additional federal funding, a plan of action from the State is necessary.

We request a copy of your plan of action to reach zero cases of legionellosis at IVH Quincy. We once again urge you to immediately implement all recommendations made by the CDC over the past few years and commit to informing the public in a more timely fashion of any additional cases. We also reiterate our request that you conduct a review of IDVA and Illinois Department of Public Health leadership, as we remain troubled that your Administration has failed to adequately mitigate and prevent Legionnaires' outbreaks in an immediate and transparent fashion.

Illinois families have entrusted the well-being of their loved ones—many of whom have fought so bravely for our country—to the State, and yet you have neglected IVH Quincy. Our Veterans deserve better. As Governor, you have a responsibility to ensure that no more residents die from or contract this terrible disease.

We hope to hear from you directly and promptly with a specific plan of action.

Sincerely,