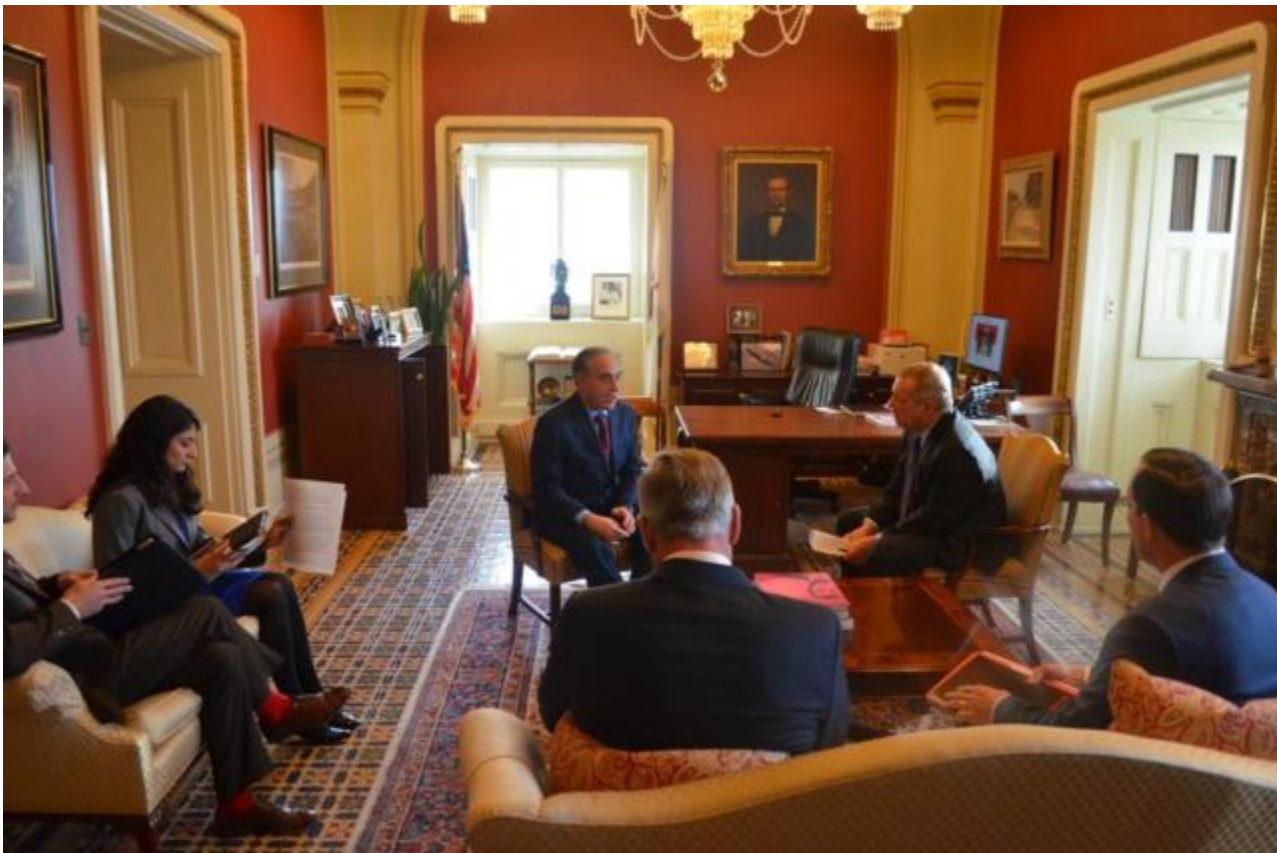


Durbin meets with VA Secretary, offers VA expert assistance to help mitigate Legionnaires' from Illinois Veterans' Home Quincy

February 14 2018 4:55 PM



WASHINGTON – One day after two new cases of Legionnaires' disease were [confirmed](#) at the Illinois Veterans' Home (IVH) Quincy, U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) today met with U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Secretary David Shulkin to discuss the ongoing legionellosis outbreaks at IVH Quincy. Secretary Shulkin offered

VA expert assistance – those who have a history of addressing Legionnaires’ outbreaks across the country – to help mitigate legionellosis outbreaks at IVH Quincy. Durbin also pressed the VA Secretary to commit to continuing to support IVH Quincy should it request any additional VA support in the future to help prevent any further Legionnaires’ outbreaks.

“While IVH Quincy is owned, operated, and managed by the State of Illinois, I’ve supported IVH Quincy through my role in the federal government and will continue to do so. As I mentioned in my conversation with the Governor last month, the VA reimburses the State for two-thirds of what they spend on Quincy, including spending on renovation and construction, such as the \$6.4 million investment in the water treatment facility made in 2016. Today, I upheld my promise to the Governor to continue to advocate for IVH Quincy and push for federal funding on their behalf,” said Durbin. **“Now it is the Governor’s turn to uphold his promise to the veterans, residents, and family members of those living at IVH Quincy to reach ‘zero instances of Legionella infection’. In today’s meeting, Secretary Shulkin offered the assistance of VA experts who specialize in mitigating Legionnaires’ across the country. It is my hope that the Governor will immediately take the VA up on this offer.**

Durbin continued, **“The fact that two new cases of Legionnaires’ disease were confirmed at IVH Quincy yesterday shows a complete dereliction of duty by the Governor and his Administration. Governor Rauner, it is time for you to take real action on this crisis before another life is lost.”**

The VA provides IVH Quincy with millions of dollars per year – averaging \$14 million a year since 2013 – through the Per Diem Program, which helps cover the cost of daily care for the veterans at the home. Over the years, Durbin has also secured funding through the VA for IVH Quincy through the State Home and Construction Grant (SHCG) program, covering the cost of up to 65 percent of construction or acquisition costs, such as the \$6.4 million investment in the water treatment facility made in 2016.

In January, Durbin [visited](#) IVH Quincy to meet with leadership and tour the facility. He called for improved transparency from Governor Rauner and his Administration in disclosing all new cases of Legionnaires’ disease and has urged the state to comply with all recommendations from the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to prevent future outbreaks. In his press conference following the visit, Durbin suggested that Gov. Rauner immediately consider renovations in the Elmore building, which has had a high prevalence of cases of legionellosis since 2015, and was found last month by the CDC to have a strain of the bacteria that was the same type associated with the 2015 epidemic. Also last month, Durbin and Duckworth [pressed](#) Gov. Rauner for a copy of his Administration’s targeted, specific plan of action for IVH Quincy.

Since the first Legionnaires' disease outbreak in 2015, Durbin has been in contact with state and federal agencies to make certain that IVH Quincy is taking the proper steps to provide a high quality of care to our veterans and their families, and to prevent any future outbreaks. Durbin and Duckworth have called for a review of the state's response and have worked to ensure that the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs and the Illinois Department of Public Health continue to receive federal assistance from the CDC and VA.

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.

Legionnaires' disease is a severe, often lethal, form of pneumonia. It's caused by the *Legionella* bacteria found in both potable and non-potable water systems. Each year, an estimated 10,000 to 18,000 people are infected with the *Legionella* bacteria in the United States.

Reporting in December 2017 by WBEZ [revealed](#) that Illinois public health officials delayed informing the public for nearly a week about a deadly 2015 Legionnaires' disease outbreak at a state veterans' home in Quincy despite knowing the facility was facing "the beginning of an epidemic," according to internal emails from Gov. Bruce Rauner's office. Further, WBEZ reports that the state has repeatedly provided misinformation regarding the number of confirmed cases of Legionnaires' disease and the timeline of the state's response. Eleven families are now suing the state for negligence.