



Durbin requests VA, CDC, and EPA assistance in investigating potential Legionella-linked death at Manteno Illinois Veterans Home

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WASHINGTON, D.C. — U.S. Senators Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) and Dick Durbin (D-IL) wrote to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) today requesting the agencies deploy a multidisciplinary team of experts to help state officials as they address Legionnaires' disease at the Illinois Veterans Home in Manteno, Illinois. After the tragic death of a Veteran at IVH Manteno in Kankakee County, the Senators are asking VA, CDC and EPA to accept the invitation to participate in the Illinois Legionnaires' Task Force, which was recently established by Illinois Governor JB Pritzker.

“The tragic death of a Veteran that may have resulted from Legionnaires' disease acquired while living at IVH Manteno is a sobering reminder of the need to marshal public resources to urgently address the daunting public health challenge posed by Legionella contamination,” the Senators wrote. “The dedicated civil servants at VA, EPA and CDC are among the foremost experts in handling this type of public health and environmental challenge. We request that your respective agency's experts assist the Legionnaires' Task Force in safeguarding the health and well-being of Veterans in Illinois.”

If medical officials confirm that the death of the IVH Manteno resident resulted from Legionnaires' disease, it will be vital to contain the tragic public health incident. Following the deadly outbreak of Legionnaires' disease at the Illinois Veterans Home in Quincy that began in 2015 and claimed the lives of more than a dozen Illinoisans, Senators Duckworth and Durbin have worked to address the crisis and secure federal support for permanent solutions.

Last [February](#), Duckworth and Durbin urged the CDC to take a greater leadership role in helping to address the public health crisis at IVH Quincy. In letters to former Illinois Gov. Bruce Rauner last [January](#) and [March](#), Duckworth and Durbin repeatedly pressed for a detailed plan of action for ensuring the safety of residents, family and staff at IVH Quincy. In addition, they successfully secured additional federal funding through the annual appropriations process for construction projects at state-run Veteran health facilities like IVH Quincy. Duckworth and Durbin also invited the VA to IVH Quincy for a consultative visit on how to better prevent such outbreaks in the future.

Dear Secretary Wilkie, Acting Administrator Wheeler and Director Redfield:

We write to request that the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) assist the State of Illinois in addressing the latest Legionnaires' disease diagnosis at the Illinois Veterans Home (IVH) in Manteno in Kankakee County, Illinois. We also request that the VA, EPA and CDC accept the State of Illinois' invitation to participate in the Illinois Legionnaires' Task Force, which was recently established by Illinois Governor JB Pritzker.

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As with prior outbreaks in Illinois, the VA, CDC and EPA can and should continue to serve in an important and supportive role, providing Federal expertise and assistance to help the Legionnaires' Task Force identify how the IVH-Manteno water supply was contaminated with the bacterium Legionella and develop a specific set of actions to fix the problem and prevent future contamination.

Federal support is warranted because corrective actions, from personnel training to equipment upgrades, are often complex and at-risk for implementation errors. The dedicated civil servants at VA, EPA and CDC are among the foremost experts in handling this type of public health and environmental challenge. We request that your respective agency's experts assist the Legionnaires' Task Force in safeguarding the health and well-being of Veterans in Illinois.

In addition, since this public health challenge is not limited to Illinois, we urge the VA, EPA and CDC to carefully examine existing Federal statutes, regulations and policies, and provide Congress with actionable recommendations and if necessary, legislative proposals that would strengthen and modernize Federal guidance provided to State authorities with respect to preventing water contamination.

Thank you in advance for reviewing our request and we look forward to receiving regular updates on the status of VA, EPA and CDC efforts, in coordination with any other relevant Federal entities, to assist the Illinois Legionnaires' Task Force in protecting Americans who served our country in uniform.