



Durbin Discusses COVID-19 With Illinois Veteran Service Organization Leaders

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SPRINGFIELD – U.S. Dick Durbin (D-IL) today spoke with Illinois veterans service organization leaders about ensuring COVID-19 treatment and access to VA benefits for veterans and the economic constraints veterans organizations are facing as a result of the economic crisis spurred by the COVID-19 pandemic. Durbin spoke with the leaders about the rise in COVID-19 cases this spring in Illinois VA hospitals across the state and the growing backlog of VA benefit claims. Durbin discussed his efforts to urge the VA to quickly address the growing backlog in benefits claims and provide financial support and equipment for Illinois VA facilities to efficiently care for COVID-19 patients.

“Veterans across Illinois, many who are over the age of 65 and have underlying health conditions, rely on the VA for treatment. With the urgency around the COVID-19 crisis, it’s even more vital that our hospitals are equipped to handle more patients and the growing number of VA benefit claims,” said Durbin. “I’ll continue to ensure support for the VA and VSOs that are working hard on the ground to provide critical care and services to veterans in our state.”

On the call, Durbin also discussed the murder of Fort Hood Army Specialist Vanessa Guillén and sexual harassment and assault within the military. Durbin is a cosponsor of the [*Military Justice Improvement Act*](#), which refers the decision on whether to prosecute cases of sexual harassment and assault to independent, military prosecutors independent of a victim’s chain of command.

Groups joining the call included:

- Illinois AMVETS Service Foundation
- Chicago Veterans

- Volunteers of America of IL
- National Women Veterans United
- American Legion
- Veterans of Foreign Wars
- Muslim American Veterans Association
- IL Department of Veterans' Affairs