

Durbin, Duckworth Discuss Covid-19 Outbreak At Lasalle State Veterans Home With Idva Director, Call For Investigation

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SPRINGFIELD – U.S. Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), a combat Veteran and former Director of the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs (IDVA), today discussed ongoing efforts to mitigate and prevent COVID-19 at State Veterans Homes in Illinois with Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs (IDVA) Director Linda Chapa LaVia, specifically the outbreak at the LaSalle State Veterans Home. This week, Durbin and Duckworth sent a [letter](#) to Director Chapa LaVia calling for an independent investigation into the situation, which Chapa LaVia [launched](#) today. Durbin and Duckworth also asked Director Chapa LaVia whether any U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) support can be provided to the Home, as well as Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) support to quell the virus.

“We spoke with Director Chapa LaVia today to hear how IDVA is working to protect veterans and State Veterans Home staff in Illinois from COVID-19, and about the concerning reports coming from the LaSalle Home. Preventing and mitigating the spread of this virus at our State Veterans Homes must be of utmost importance, and any wrongdoing and neglect to COVID-19 protocols and safety measures at the LaSalle Home must be fixed. What’s taking place at the LaSalle Home and at veterans homes across our State is a tragedy. Senator Duckworth and I will continue to push the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to offer its support at the federal level to protect Illinois’ veterans,” Durbin said.

“The recent infections of hundreds of staff and Veterans at Illinois Veterans Homes--and the tragic deaths of at least 27 of our state's heroes these infections have caused--are incredibly troubling and pose a significant public health risk as they threaten even more Veterans' lives," said Duckworth. "I appreciated the opportunity to discuss these outbreaks with Director Chapa LaVia this morning and am pleased that under her leadership, the IDVA is working to bring these outbreaks under control and acting swiftly on Senator Durbin's and my request for an independent review to better serve our Veterans and prevent future outbreaks.”

This month, IDVA reported 105 resident positives, 95 employee positives, and 27 deaths at the LaSalle Veterans Home; others have since recovered. LaSalle County is also experiencing a high rate of COVID-19 spread, having more than doubled cases in the past month with a seven-day rolling positivity rate of 19% as of November 13. Since the start of the latest LaSalle outbreak, employees are being tested at every shift change and residents are tested daily. Employees also undergo daily health screenings. Visitation has been limited, except for compassionate care visits for certain residents with COVID-19 who run the risk of a rapid change in condition.

The VA continues to provide supplies or technical assistance to State Veterans Homes, such as for providing 21,000 masks to Illinois State Veterans Homes as of this month. The *CARES Act* included \$590 million for vulnerable veterans, including to support State Veterans Homes, as well as another \$150 million for State Veteran Home construction grants. The VA is also providing technical support to IDVA in light of the outbreak at LaSalle.