

VA Rates 70 Percent of its Nursing Homes as Failures

VFW, Legion national commanders demand immediate action

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WASHINGTON — The national commanders of the nation's two largest veterans organizations are demanding that Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Robert Wilkie bring immediate attention to his nursing home program that currently has 70 percent of its 132 homes receiving failing grades by the VA's own rating system.

The call by Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. National Commander B.J. Lawrence and American Legion National Commander Brett Reistad is in response to a [series of scathing articles](#) by two USA Today and Boston Globe reporters who documented substandard and negligent care at the VA nursing home in Brockton, Mass., which is one of 45 nursing homes that received the VA's lowest rating of one star. Forty-seven homes received two stars, 16 homes three stars, and 15 homes four stars. Only nine nursing homes received the VA's top five-star rating.

"While much of the media's attention has been on the proper implementation of VA healthcare legislation, we cannot forget about 46,000 mostly senior veterans who reside in these nursing homes," said the two national commanders, who collectively speak for more than 4.6 million members and their auxiliaries.

"The media reports about sub-par care, patient neglect and safety violations at VA nursing homes are more than just disturbing," said the Legion's national commander.

"Legionnaires, our friends in the VFW, and anybody who respects veterans should be angered by this," said Reistad. "These are not just patients in a home, these are people who in the prime of their lives risked their lives, and made enormous sacrifices on behalf of our country. America's veterans deserve better. We not only expect VA to fix these problems immediately, but we want transparency. Those who sleep on the job and ignore the best interests of their patients need to find a different employer."

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Echoing his counterpart, the VFW national commander said “These veterans earned the right to receive high quality care in a fully-staffed and well-managed facility. Their families deserve to know that their loved ones — their heroes — are not being abandoned or abused, and America needs to be reassured that the VA is honoring our nation’s promise to those who have borne the battle,” said Lawrence. “The VA must improve its delivery of quality care at these facilities. It must recruit and retain only the best healthcare professionals and support staff, and it must hold all employees accountable for their actions or inactions. It is not a right but a privilege to work for America’s veterans, and anything less is unacceptable.”