

RODNEY DAVIS
13TH DISTRICT, ILLINOIS

www.rodneymorris.house.gov
www.facebook.com/reprodmorris
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1740 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-2371

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1313

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David J. Shulkin, Under Secretary for Health
United States Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Under Secretary Shulkin:

I am writing to address several concerns I have heard repeatedly from constituents in my district regarding the Danville, Illinois Veteran Administration's Illiana Healthcare System customer service phone line. The customer service phone line is used by veterans in this healthcare system for all appointments in the Danville facility and at several outpatient clinics around my district, which includes emergency authorization requests.

My constituents have informed me about long hold times, dropped calls, and rude customer service representatives. One veteran waited on hold for such a long time that she used her entire allotment of prepaid minutes waiting to speak to someone and was unable to reach a customer service representative to assist her in making an appointment. After she called my office, my staff assistant waited on the phone for seventy-five minutes before reaching a representative to make an appointment on her behalf.

Another veteran shared with me the difficulty of trying to make an appointment through the phone line. After an accident that left his eye socket fractured, the emergency room doctor told him that he needed to see an eye doctor within three days to determine if he needed surgery on his eye. A month passed before he was able to get authorization to see the VA eye doctor. As a result, his eye began to heal and surgery became unnecessary, causing his eye socket to heal without proper examination by an eye doctor. This is just one example in which the difficulty of making an appointment through this system has led to improper care, especially in cases of emergency.

In November, my staff discussed this issue with leadership at the Danville VA. It was suggested to us that changes made to the phone line must be made at the Health Administration level. They also shared our concerns having heard similar complaints from the veterans they serve.

I would like to meet with you by the end of January to discuss your plan to address these problems with the customer service phone line. Please let me know if you have additional questions. As a former congressional district staffer, I have a unique perspective about the level of unresponsiveness from this agency. I look forward to working with you to resolve this problem and improve the care and service our veterans deserve.

Sincerely,



Rodney Davis
Member of Congress, IL-13