

COMMISSION ON CARE

Statement from Chairperson Nancy Schlichting

The Commission on Care is charged with providing recommendations for reforming veterans' health care to the President, the Congress, and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs in a report due not later than June 30, 2016.

The Commission is committed to a vision of transforming veterans' health care to enhance access, choice, quality, and well-being. The Commissioners are working to create recommendations that ensure timely access to the best providers for meeting veterans' health care needs; provide community-based, innovative care that drives improved outcomes; integrate health care within communities to foster convenience and efficiency; and support veterans in achieving optimal well-being. Values that drive our work include providing veteran-centric care, assimilating veterans into the greater community, and creating community-based integrated networks to improve health care access and choice for veterans.

Recent media accounts have referenced a Commission on Care document, referred to as the "strawman document," as an indication that the Commission plans to recommend dismantling the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) and privatizing veterans' health care. The scenario presented in is one of several that have been proposed. As the term strawman implies, the document was created by a subset of Commissioners to describe their personal ideas, which ultimately facilitated and focused public discussion and prompted new proposals. It was not presented as a final report. It represents options on a range of possibilities the Commissioners are evaluating as they work toward a consensus decision on their recommendations.

Since its first meeting in September 2015, the Commission has worked openly at public meetings gathering information from representatives of VHA, veterans service organizations, veterans, and others knowledgeable of the issues related to veterans' health care. The Commission's website houses an extensive store of the information gathered, including meeting minutes, presentation slides, articles, and more. These documents offer a broad view of the various types of information the Commission is considering as it formulates its recommendations.

With delivery of the Commission's final report nearly three months away and more public meetings scheduled, there is still much work to be done. We value feedback of all stakeholders – veterans, their families, veteran service organizations, VA employees, elected representatives, and taxpayers – and encourage all to share their thoughts with the Commission at its website:

<http://commissiononcare.sites.usa.gov/contact-us-2/>