



PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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CONTACT: See Below Statement

VCS Statement on Veterans Crisis Line VA Inspector General Report

(Washington – March 20, 2017) – Veterans for Common Sense, a Washington, DC-based veterans organization, today released the following statement in response to the release of a report regarding a healthcare inspection by the Office of the Inspector General, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA-OIG) entitled, "[Evaluation of the Veterans Health Administration Veterans Crisis Line](#)" (Report No. 16-03985-181, March 20, 2017).

"In 2007, VCS filed suit against VA on behalf of veterans experiencing impossibly long wait times to access VA healthcare and disability benefits – and the survivors of veterans who committed suicide while waiting. Within the same year, VA launched the National Veterans Suicide Prevention Hotline, which today is known as the Veterans Crisis Line (VCL).

"It has been disheartening to hear of VA's Veterans Crisis Line staffing issues, responsiveness, and appropriateness of responses, particularly in light of continued high suicide rates among veterans of all ages.

"Today's report release confirms those issues and others. What's most concerning is that these serious issues remain unaddressed.

"Veterans for Common Sense calls on the Trump Administration to immediately begin implementing the VA Inspector General's recommendations for the Veterans Crisis Line. Every day we wait could mean more veterans' lives are lost through suicide – some might be prevented by ensuring VA's front-line Veterans Crisis Line is adequately staffed, its workers properly trained, and no veteran's literal call for help goes unanswered, placed on hold, or sent to voicemail. Our veterans deserve the care they need at the time it is needed."

According to the VA OIG report, "Since its launch in 2007, through September 2016, VCL staff have answered over 2.5 million calls and initiated the dispatch of emergency services to callers in crisis over 66,000 times."

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