

2163 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-2605
DISTRICT OFFICES:
2930 WETMORE AVENUE, SUITE 9F
EVERETT, WA 98201
(425) 252-3188
119 N. COMMERCIAL STREET, SUITE 275
BELLINGHAM, WA 98225
(360) 733-4500
E-Mail: Rick.Larsen@mail.house.gov
<http://larsen.house.gov>

RICK LARSEN
2ND DISTRICT, WASHINGTON
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4702

RANKING MEMBER
COMMITTEE ON
TRANSPORTATION
AND INFRASTRUCTURE

November 11, 2025

The Honorable Douglas A. Collins
Secretary
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Ave NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Collins:

I am writing to share information and feedback from recent roundtables I held with veterans throughout my district. While I am disappointed the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) did not participate in these productive community discussions, I am committed to ensuring VA hears the concerns of my local veterans and partners with my office to deliver the services and benefits these veterans need.

During my time in Congress, I have held more than 70 town halls and community discussions to hear from veterans in my district. These events have almost always been held in partnership with or with the participation of representatives from Puget Sound VA. My office has an excellent working relationship with our local VA leadership, who are committed to serving their community. VA's participation in these community dialogues is essential to their success. Past events have resulted in casework success stories that have ensured veterans can access the health care and benefits they deserve. With VA's help, I have written legislation to solve the problems I heard about at these district events.

From September 23-26, 2025, I held five veteran roundtables at Lummi Nation and in Snohomish, Whatcom, Skagit, and Island counties, and invited representatives from Puget Sound VA to attend. However, not a single event had a VA representative in attendance. It is unfortunate that VA did not take the opportunity to hear directly from veterans about their concerns.

At these roundtables, veterans raised concerns about a wide range of issues, as outlined in the attached report, entitled *Listening to Veterans in Northwest Washington*. The topics raised included specific challenges related to transportation, health care and housing, which I look forward to working with VA to address.

In rural areas, health care access is a persistent problem. I heard from veterans about the difficulties they have accessing transportation to and from VA facilities, an issue that is especially acute for veterans living on islands and rural communities in my district. These veterans requested VA provide more mobile clinics to serve hard-to-reach areas.

While the community care system serves a great purpose in certain instances, veterans told me that they often wait for hours on the phone just to get a referral approved. Many also shared that they prefer care at VA facilities from providers trained in treating veterans. It is clear from these conversations that Congress and VA must invest in improving access to direct VA care, instead of expanding community care beyond its necessary scope.

Washington state continues to have one of the highest rates of veteran homelessness in the nation. Preventing veteran homelessness starts with keeping veterans in their homes. In the Second District, the VA Service Purchasing Program (VASP) provided a critical safety net for veterans facing foreclosure on VA-backed home loans until VA ended the program in May 2025. I heard directly from veteran service providers who helped veterans keep their homes under VASP, but are now unable to do the same for others. By ending VASP without a suitable alternative in place, especially as the cost of living continues to rise, VA has caused even more veteran homelessness, and that is unacceptable.

Going forward, I sincerely hope that VA recognizes the importance of partnering with Members of Congress to listen to veterans about how VA can better deliver world-class health care and benefits to the women and men who have served.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. I stand ready to work with you to serve the veterans of Northwest Washington state and look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,



Rick Larsen

U.S. Representative

Washington State, Second District