



A MESSAGE FROM SDVSOA  
CHAIRMAN RICHARD

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Report on the Sioux Falls VA's  
Town Hall Meeting  
November 14, 2014

This meeting was hosted by Darwin Goodspeed, Director of the SFVAHC System and James Brubaker, Director of the Regional Office. There seemed to be about 40 or so veterans and others in the room. Director Goodspeed opened the meeting with a report on the new Veterans Choice Card. He said that of the 34,000 enrollees in the SFVAHC System, 7300 of us got the card and explanation of the new program within the past several weeks. Veterans Choice is an attempt to have veterans over 40 miles from a VA facility and over 30 days waiting on an appointment to be seen and treated by a non-VA medical provider. When you call the number on the card you get the new Secretary of the VA telling you about the program and then a live person comes on to take more information. Director Goodspeed told how this is a three year program and it is being operated by an entity contracted by the VA.

Director Goodspeed reported on all the construction going on at the VA in Sioux Falls. Progress is coming along on a new Women's Clinic, a double expansion of medical beds and a new Operating Room. He spoke of recruiting medical professionals to include another orthopedic surgeon, psychiatrists and other health care workers. He did mention the need for Licensed Practical Nurses (LPN's) and an Acupuncturist was to start on Monday. According to Director Goodspeed, he authorizes up to \$30 million dollars a year for veterans health care outside the SDVAHC System. He was very excited about all that is happening and received encouragement along with some questions from the audience.

James Brubaker supervises both the Sioux Falls and Fargo Regional Offices. He spoke of the large capacity in which both offices are handling Compensation Claims for the VA System. When asked about South Dakota veterans waiting on decisions regarding their determination of claims, he indicated that the wait is only ten days beyond it would be if the RO were not handling other areas claims. When the new central claim distribution goes into effect, all South Dakota Claims will be directed to South Dakota for determination. These Regional Offices have been able to help veterans with a 400 day wait on a claim get a determination much faster and the audience was reminded that our RO's are part of a national organization to serve all veterans.

It was a very positive meeting and the Town Halls will continue.

Report prepared by Gordon Richard, President of the SDVSO Association