



(February 1, 2016)

In order to further improve the lines of communication and to respond to the concerns between the National VA Council and you our members, I have established a National VA Council Briefing. This NVAC Briefing will bring you the latest news and developments within DVA and provide you with the current status of issues this Council is currently addressing. I believe that this NVAC Briefing will greatly enhance the way in which we communicate and the way in which we share new information, keeping you better informed.

Alma L. Lee
National VA Council, President

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**In This Briefing: GOP Candidates take a swing at what one called 'sheer incompetence' inside the VA-Federal Times**

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Former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush speaks during the Republican presidential debate at the Iowa Events Center in Des Moines, He was one of a number of candidates that criticized management at the Department of Veterans Affairs in the wake of a series of scandals

Donald Trump's absence may have been the elephant in the room for the Jan. 28 Fox News/Google Republican presidential debate, but it was the Department of Veterans Affairs that got the most notice from the candidates.

The VA has been reeling from a series of scandals related to everything from lengthy backlogs for patient care to two senior executives who misused their positions for material gain, making the agency a ripe target for debate fodder.

"I will make sure that we fire the sheer incompetence inside the Department of Veterans Affairs and then we'll give veterans a choice card so that they don't have to travel hours and hours to get care if they want to go to their private

provider," Bush said. "You want to make the Veterans Administration do a better job, give veterans choices and you'll get a much better result."

In Fox News' earlier Republican undercard debate, which included four GOP candidates polling at the lower end of the field, former Virginia Gov. Jim Gilmore also took a swing at the VA, offering a laundry list of necessary reforms:

"The lousy appeals process that they have got; the fact that sometimes they get good service at the VA and sometimes they don't; and the fact that post-traumatic stress syndrome is not properly recognized – that psychology positions are unavailable."

"And I will say this to you – as the only veteran in this race, when I become president of the United States, the veterans are going to be treated with respect and competently," Gilmore added.

Carly Fiorina also took the agency to task for its past scandals, comparing her time as CEO to Hewlett Packard to the sweeping personnel changes that she would make at the VA, if elected president.

"When we know that 307,000 veterans have died waiting for health care and the VA handed out \$142 million worth of bonuses for superb performance, I'm going to start by firing 400 senior executives at the VA," she said.

The presidential race kicks off on Feb. 1 with the Iowa caucuses.