

## Keeping The Promise To Arizona Veterans

Thank you for inviting me today to speak about the VA Choice Card, Management Accountability, The Phoenix VA Medical Center

In August 2013 I moved to Arizona from New Jersey,

I was enrolled in the Philadelphia VA Healthcare System. I knew I had to transfer my eligibility to the Phoenix VA Health Care System. In September of that year I applied to the SE VA Clinic in Mesa and was told it would be at least a year or more before I could get a primary Doctor there. I was even told it might be sooner if I enrolled in the Tucson VA.

I could not wait because I was receiving medication from my VA in Philadelphia but if the Dr's don't see you-they will not renew your prescriptions. I went downtown to the Phoenix VA Hospital which is about 50 miles from my home and was told the same thing, I then spoke to an Advocate and was able to get an appointment in 9 months, they told me the reason for such a long wait time was due to decrease in staffing and staff leaving for better paying opportunities outside the VA System.

I was not satisfied and called the OIG's office in Washington and filled a complaint. In about two weeks I received a call from the VISN that oversees the Phoenix VA System and was given an appointment for a Primary Physician at the Mesa SE Clinic .

I know how to advocate but there are a lot of veterans that would have given up.

Now I am officially enrolled in the Phoenix VA Health care system, seeing my primary care Physician and receiving my medication. Before I left Philadelphia VA ,I was being seen for an Urological Condition and should have a follow up. I requested an appointment for Urology to my primary physician, I waited over a year for my request for Urology Appointment and was contacted by Tri-west to see an outside Urologist.

I received excellent care with multiple visits from this outside group. At this time the Phoenix VA offered very little Urological Services and there were a lot of veterans that were referred out to this group for their care. After a follow up visit I was told that the Urology Practice has dropped their contract with Tri-west because of delayed payments for Service provided. I believe that issue has been resolved.

The Phoenix VA Hospital has taken back my Urology appointments now and in the future.

I feel the Phoenix VA Health Care System is improving and correcting some of the previous short falls but I am concerned that the level of care for Veterans like myself will continue and not repeat some of the problems we had in the past.

There are a lot of dedicated employees the the Phoenix VA System and we are starting to see more and more veterans working in the Healthcare System.

I think it is important to continue with the Veteran's Choice Card Program, however I still feel there are barriers that prevent Veterans from using it. The language states the 40 mile rule to the closest VA facility that has a primary physician. There are multiple CBOCS here in Arizona within those 40 miles, however they can not provide all the services that are needed for the Veterans and still have to travel great distances for care to the local VA Hospital. Sometimes this can be over 200 miles here in Arizona. I understand no System is perfect and a lot of these programs are new but I think it is important we veterans keep the Choice Card for an added insurance policy for our Earned and Deserving Health Care from our Government.

Thank you,

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