

The Two-Way - NPR's News Blog

Veterans Sec. Shinseki: Case Backlog Up Again; Economy, PTSD Are Factors

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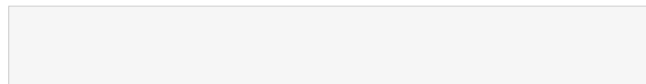
07:50 am

November 11, 2010

by MARK MEMMOTT

On this Veterans Day 2010, *Morning Edition* co-host Steve Inskeep had a long conversation with Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric Shinseki and the discussion underscored the sacrifices made by the men and women who have served in the U.S. military and the hardships many of them face.

You can listen to the whole discussion here:



A few key points:

Steve Inskeep speaks with Veterans Affairs Sec. Eric Shinseki

— Steve noted that "it may be startling to some people to

realize that the backlog ... pending cases, pending disability claims at the V.A. has soared in this year and is now above 700,000."

Shinseki said that "last year when we talked ... (it was) probably 4 to 500,000."

What happened?

The V.A. closed about 900,000 cases last year, Shinseki said, "and then we got 1 million cases back in. These are new cases, for the most part."



Karen Bleier/AFP/Getty Images
Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric Shinseki.

— Has the weak economy meant that many veterans who used to have employer-provided health care are now turning to the V.A. for help?

"That's a good point," Shinseki said. "Over the past, probably 18 months, the economic downturn has had that impact on families."

— Homelessness among veterans has also contributed to the increase in the backlog of cases, Shinseki said. While the department has "committed to ending homelessness" among veterans within five years, the effort is "just not going fast enough."

NPR has other stories today that are related to Veterans Day, including:

— ["No Place To Call Home For Many Female Veterans."](#)

— ["Some Vets Return With 'Hidden' Vision Problems."](#)

For some materials about the history of Veterans Day, [there's this webpage from the V.A.](#) The department has also produced this video:

Tags: [Eric Shinseki](#)

Source: YouTube

Department of Veterans Affairs

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Recent First



Gail Fishman (emperl) wrote:

I'm am gratified to see that the military is finally acknowledging the effects of war on human beings. We should all pay more attention to PTSD, suicide, homelessness, and vets who return with severe injuries.

Thursday, November 11, 2010 6:43:02 PM

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ed botsko (Bikerdude) wrote:

Perhaps the VA would be a great place to start adding jobs. Overloaded usually means under staffed. It is vitally important that these veterans are cared for properly.

Thursday, November 11, 2010 12:50:41 PM

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