

U.S. Representative Salud Carbajal

Witness Testimony: House Committee of Veterans' Affairs 119th Congress Member Day

Thank you, Chairman Bost and Ranking Member Takano for allowing me to speak before this committee today.

As a veteran myself, I know firsthand the sacrifices that come with military service — and the challenges that can follow when that service ends.

That's why, in Congress, I've made it my mission to ensure that every veteran has access to the care and benefits they have earned — without delay and without unnecessary barriers.

One area I've been focusing on is the long wait times and frustrating delays our veterans face when they call local VA medical centers and clinics.

I believe that if you've served our nation, the process to access your healthcare should be fast and simple.

Yet for too many veterans on the Central Coast and beyond, a simple phone call to schedule an appointment or ask a question can turn into endless holds, confusing transfers, and dead ends.

My staff and I consistently hear from veterans who have wait times exceeding an hour or more. Or they are promised a call back within 24 to 48 hours, only to never receive a call back.

I have even heard from constituents who were forced to drive more than an hour to the nearest CBOC to make an appointment in person after failing to get through to anyone on the phone.

Simply put, this is unacceptable. To me, this is a sign the system is failing our nation's veterans.

It's critical for Congress to act, and provide additional resources to the Veterans Health Administration.

Only with stronger investments into our local VA systems can we ensure medical centers and clinics have the staff and tools they need to answer calls quickly, schedule appointments efficiently, and treat veterans with the respect they deserve.

I have long called for these investments, and I will not stop until this issue is finally fixed.

Thank you.