



VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR, INC

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December 2018

"If peace is to come, it will be ordinary men and women who bring it about. If we cast ourselves (and our votes) at the feet of the first politician who sounds good, we'll pay for it in spades. Our job is to tell the truth about what is going on, to organize others and to work with them to keep the heat on, to use every tactic we can think of to force those who run things in this country to come across"—Jeff Sharlet, 1968

Dear Friends,

In December 1968, 50 years ago, things seemed bleak. Assassinations, a police riot at the Democratic convention, and the Tet Offensive were fresh in our memories. The war against Vietnam was still raging on. VVAW was in its infancy and struggled to find its place in the anti-war movement. It was hard to be optimistic.

Now we look back and see that years of struggle were in front of us before many of our goals were achieved, and we helped stop the war. Collective action on many fronts worked.

Now, in 2018, it is hard not to be overwhelmed by the constant attacks on all our victories by the fool in the White House. Wars rage all across the world. The VA is under attack. Yet we must not give up hope. We must fight back. We and our allies can overcome. The recent mid-term election results show the power of collective action. But that is not enough. We must fight back. We must keep up the pressure, in any way we can. Though we are under constant assault on many fronts, we must unite and fight to save the VA.

"VA healthcare . . . I think it's amazing healthcare. It's integrated healthcare. It's the only integrated healthcare system in the U.S. The doctors are on salary, no incentive to overtreat or undertreat. It negotiates drug prices with drug companies so it has better prices. It takes care of some of the most difficult and deserving patients in the United States, about 9 million veterans. . . But it is really extraordinary healthcare. It is the kind of healthcare that serves you if you have an amputation, if you have PTSD, mental health problems, if you're aging . . . I think it is extremely high quality care.—Suzanne Gordon, Veteran health care advocate

A recent study by Brown University reports that the United States has spent nearly \$6 trillion on wars that directly contributed to the deaths of around 500,000 people since the 9/11 attacks of 2001. ***That's 6 trillion dollars.*** Meanwhile, the current administration's stealth VA is intent on VA privatization, that could range from \$13.9 billion to \$32.1 billion over five years. Since the administration opposes lifting overall government spending, the increased cost of private care will come at the expense of the VA's own health system. Also, current Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Robert Wilkie has begun forming a plan to cut the agency's budget per the direction of the current President.

Meanwhile, the Department of Veterans Affairs recently released figures showing that the VA had

more than 45,000 full-time job vacancies—thousands more than had previously been reported. The rising number of vacancies threatens to undermine VA care and services. We need to demand that the VA fill these open positions before expanding care options outside the VA system. Not properly staffing hospitals and clinics undermines the department's ability to handle veterans' medical needs.

We need to pressure our elected officials, especially those swept into office by the recent blue wave to fight for our VA. No privatization. Fill the open jobs at the VA. Stop the wars that are continuing to fill the rooms of the VA. We must band together. We need to raise our voices and break the veil of ignorance. Educate your neighbors about the reality of your service and what can be done to fix our country.

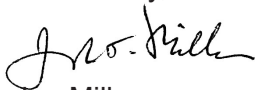
Organize in the VA. Take copies of *The Veteran* with you on your next visit. Share them with other patients, doctors, and nurses. Make contact with the unions at your local VA. We all need to stand together to save the VA.

If you haven't already, register to vote. Encourage others to do so. It is one tool in our ongoing struggle for justice that we must use. Educate. Agitate. Don't give up hope. We had hope 50 years ago. Now tempered with realism, we still must keep on, until our last breath.

Please join us in trying to stop the attacks on the VA. Write a letter to the editor or op-ed to your local paper. Submit an article for VVAW's newspaper, *The Veteran*. Educate the next generation by speaking with local high schoolers. Join marches and events where you can. Speak to fellow veterans about what VVAW did for you. Fight to save the VA. Take action in whatever ways you can.

We are deeply thankful when our members and supporters make tax-deductible donations to VVAW's work, at whatever level. Your contributions to VVAW help us keep distributing our newspaper, *The Veteran*, to our members, friends, and supporters. Your donations also keep our website going, where we have every issue of VVAW's newspaper online as well as archives of many other articles, photos, and videos. **Take this opportunity to make an end-of-the-year tax-deductible donation before December 31.** We thank all of you for your continued support. On behalf of VVAW's staff and Board, we hope you have a safe and wonderful New Year!

In solidarity,



Joe Miller

VVAW Board member

I am sending Vietnam Veterans Against the War \$35 \$50 \$100 \$250 \$500 Other to support its work for peace, justice, and for decent benefits for all veterans. Donations to VVAW are tax deductible. You can also donate online at www.vvaw.org.

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