

*Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2017*

**Remarks on Signing the VA Choice and Quality Employment Act of 2017 in  
Bedminster, New Jersey**

*August 12, 2017*

*The President.* Well, thank you very much. As you know, this was a small press conference, but a very important one, and it was scheduled to talk about the great things that we're doing with the Secretary on the Veterans Administration. And we will talk about that, very much so, in a little while, but I thought I should put out a comment as to what's going on in Charlottesville.

So, again, I want to thank everybody for being here. In particular, I want to thank our incredible veterans. And thank you, fellas. Let me shake your hand.

*[At this point, the President shook hands with veterans in attendance.]*

Great people. They're great people.

*Situation in Charlottesville, VA*

But we're closely following the terrible events unfolding in Charlottesville, Virginia. We condemn in the strongest possible terms this egregious display of hatred, bigotry, and violence, on many sides. On many sides. It's been going on for a long time in our country. Not Donald Trump, not Barack Obama. This has been going on for a long, long time.

It has no place in America. What is vital now is a swift restoration of law and order and the protection of innocent lives. No citizen should ever fear for their safety and security in our society, and no child should ever be afraid to go outside and play or be with their parents and have a good time.

I just got off the phone with the Governor of Virginia, Terry McAuliffe, and we agreed that the hate and the division must stop and must stop right now. We have to come together as Americans with love for our Nation and true affection—really, and I say this so strongly—true affection for each other.

Our country is doing very well in so many ways. We have record—just absolute record—employment. We have unemployment, the lowest it's been in almost 17 years. We have companies pouring into our country. Foxconn and car companies and so many others, they're coming back to our country. We're renegotiating trade deals to make them great for our country and great for the American worker. We have so many incredible things happening in our country. So when I watch Charlottesville, to me it's very, very sad.

I want to salute the great work of the State and local police in Virginia—incredible people; law enforcement, incredible people—and also the National Guard. They've really been working smart and working hard. They've been doing a terrific job. Federal authorities are also providing tremendous support to the Governor. He thanked me for that. And we are here to provide whatever other assistance is needed. We are ready, willing, and able.

Above all else, we must remember this truth: No matter our color, creed, religion, or political party, we are all Americans first. We love our country. We love our God. We love our flag. We're proud of our country. We're proud of who we are. So we want to get the situation

straightened out in Charlottesville, and we want to study it. And we want to see what we're doing wrong as a country, where things like this can happen.

My administration is restoring the sacred bonds of loyalty between this Nation and its citizens, but our citizens must also restore the bonds of trust and loyalty between one another. We must love each other, respect each other, and cherish our history and our future together. So important. We have to respect each other. Ideally, we have to love each other.

### *Veterans Health Care*

And now to the Veterans Administration, where I'm so proud of David Shulkin and the job you've done, what you've done in such a short period of time. I think you folks would attest to it. If anybody disagrees, you can leave the room right now. [*Laughter*]

But David really has. He's a star, what he's been able to do. So, David, I'd like to thank you very much for your leadership and for the profound improvements to the VA services that you've made in such a short period of time.

Today is another milestone in our work to transform the VA, where we're doing record-setting business, including something called the Accountability Act, where David and his executives can now hold people accountable for doing a poor job and say, "You're fired." You do a poor job for our veterans, you're fired. That's been in the making for 40 years; they weren't able to get it approved. One of our legislative successes. Frankly, one of our many legislative successes. We got it approved. And I know, David, it's making life a lot better, and people are working a lot harder because of it.

In a few moments, I will sign the VA Choice and Quality Employment Act of 2017. This bill will ensure that veterans continue to have the ability to see the doctor of their choice—so important—and don't have to wait or travel long distances for care. And during the campaign, I kept talking about it. People—these great, incredible veterans, our finest—they're waiting in line for 7 days, 9 days, 14 days, for ailments that could be fixed quickly, and they end up dying of things that could be taken care of very, very routinely. And I said, that's never going to happen when I'm President.

And I said, even at the time, before having tremendous research given to me, and after the research was given, it was still back to the same, basic common sense. Why can't they go out and see a doctor? If they have to wait 7 days or 14 days on line, why can't they see a doctor, and we'll pay for the cost of the doctor? And that's going to be a lot less expensive, but, more importantly, you're going to have immediate medical care for our veterans, and that's what we're doing. And they're very, very thankful. And it started already, quite a little while ago, considering we're a very young administration. And I think you see from the veterans, they're very, very proud of it and very happy.

Very importantly, this bill also authorizes new community-based outpatient clinics and improves the VA's ability to hire quality job candidates. We're getting candidates that are of the highest quality into the VA system now so that our veterans have more choices and more access to the absolute best possible care.

I want to thank Congressman Phil Roe, Senator Johnny Isakson—they two people have been working so hard—Senator Dean Heller for their dedicated efforts to get this bill through Congress. It was very, very tough for reasons that I guess I understand, but it was not easy. And I will tell you that Phil and Johnny and Dean worked very, very hard to get it through. And by the way, I can also say others, and even some Democrats. Do you want to say their names?

*Secretary of Veterans Affairs David J. Shulkin.* Sure.

*The President.* Go ahead. Say their names.

*Secretary Shulkin.* Senator Tester and Representative Walz were key in helping us get this done, Mr. President.

*The President.* Good. See? I can do it. [*Laughter*]

But people fought, and they really fought us hard. And now the administration is fighting for you. We're working night and day to ensure our brave veterans are provided with world-class treatment—which is what they're getting—world-class treatment. And by the way, again, we're here for just a little more than 6 months; you're seeing it on a daily basis get better and better and better. And you're hearing it from the veterans. But they're getting this great medical treatment, care, procedures, and we're getting our facilities shaped up and made into world-class facilities at the same time.

So our great veterans deserve only the best, and that's exactly what they're getting.

I want to thank everybody for being here, especially the wonderful veterans behind me. They have helped us so much. They're spectacular people.

*Situation in Charlottesville, VA*

And again, going back to Charlottesville, we have to heal the wounds of our country. These are wounds that have been going on for, really, a long time. And I thought, and everybody thought, and everybody wants it to heal, and it will heal. And we're going to make every effort possible to make sure that that healing procedure goes as quickly as possible.

I love the people of our country. I love all of the people of our country. We're going to make America great again, but we're going to make it great for all of the people of the United States of America.

Thank you very much. Thank you. Thank you very much.

[*The President shook hands with veterans and then began to exit the room.*]

Thank you, everybody.

Q. Mr. President, how do you respond to White nationalists who say they're participating in Charlottesville because they support you?

[*The President returned to the podium.*]

*The President.* They'd like me to sign the bill here instead of outside, so I think we'll do that. Okay? Thank you.

Big question is who's getting the pen, David?

*Secretary Shulkin.* Well—

*Republican National Committee Director of Military and Veterans Outreach Bob Carey.*  
CBA.

*The President.* Who's getting the pen? Come on. You folks argue about it, okay? Let me know.

[*The President signed the bill.*]

*The President.* Congratulations. Who's getting this pen? I think we're going to give it to—

*Secretary Shulkin.* Ladies first.

*The President.* Ladies first, right?

*American Legion Executive Director Verna L. Jones.* Thank you, sir. Thank you, Mr. President.

*The President.* Okay? Thank you very much, everybody. Appreciate it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:33 p.m. at the Trump National Golf Club Bedminster. S. 114, approved August 12, was assigned Public Law No. 115–46.

*Categories:* Bill Signings and Vetoes : VA Choice and Quality Employment Act of 2017, signing remarks.

*Locations:* Washington, DC.

*Names:* Carey, Bob; Heller, Dean; Isakson, John H.; Jones, Verna L.; McAuliffe, Terence R.; Obama, Barack H.; Roe, D. Phillip; Shulkin, David J.; Tester, Jon; Walz, Timothy J.

*Subjects:* Economy, national : Improvement; Government organization and employees : Accountability and transparency, strengthening efforts; Legislation, enacted : VA Choice and Quality Employment Act of 2017; New Jersey : President's visits; Veterans : Health and medical care; Veterans : Service and dedication; Veterans Affairs, Department of : Secretary; Veterans Affairs, Department of : Veterans Health Administration; Virginia : Charlottesville :: Civil unrest and violence; Virginia : Governor; Virginia: Governor.

*DCPD Number:* DCPD201700569.