

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume. An original was not available for verification of the content of this letter.

Statement on the Death of Willie T. Barrow *March 12, 2015*

Reverend Willie T. Barrow was a civil rights icon and a Chicago institution, a “Little Warrior” in pursuit of justice for all God’s children. In 1936, when she was just 12 years old, Reverend Barrow demanded to be let on to her all-White schoolbus in Texas, and the fight for equality she joined that day would become the cause of her life. She marched with Dr. King on Washington and in Selma. She stood up for labor rights and women’s rights. She made one of the first pieces of the AIDS Memorial Quilt and proudly welcomed LGBT brothers and sisters to the movement she helped lead.

Nowhere was Reverend Barrow’s impact felt more than in our hometown of Chicago. Through Operation Breadbasket, the Rainbow

PUSH Coalition, and her beloved Vernon Park Church, she never stopped doing all she could to make her community a better place. To Michelle and me, she was a constant inspiration, a lifelong mentor, and a very dear friend. I was proud to count myself among the more than 100 men and women she called her “Godchildren” and worked hard to live up to her example. I still do.

Michelle and I are deeply saddened by Reverend Barrow’s passing, but we take comfort in the knowledge that our world is a far better place because she was a part of it. Our thoughts and prayers are with Reverend Barrow’s family and with all those who loved her as we did.

Remarks Following a Roundtable Discussion on Veterans Health Care at the Carl T. Hayden Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Phoenix, Arizona *March 13, 2015*

Well, I want to thank everybody who is here for what’s been an excellent conversation, not just about this particular facility or this particular State, but how do we make sure that the VA is working for every single veteran who’s put on a uniform and has made enormous sacrifices on behalf of our country’s security and freedom.

We all know that there have been significant problems at this facility, that the kind of cooking the books and unwillingness to face up to the fact that veterans were not being adequately served went on too long, and as a consequence, we didn’t fix what needed to be fixed.

What I’m glad about is since Bob McDonald, working with Deputy Secretary Sloan Gibson—have been able to do is to start making some progress and chipping away at the problems here. And we’ve brought in a new team that has been tackling these issues to make

sure that wait times for scheduling, access to providers is greatly improved.

But what we know is that there is still more work to do. And this discussion allowed us to hone in on some problems that continue to crop up, and as a consequence, will allow us to fix them.

I want to thank the Members of Congress who are here. All of them have expressed great interest in how the Choice Act is being implemented. This legislation that Congress moved forward provided a lot of resources for us to be able to hire more clinicians and to beef up the services that are provided in many of the existing VA centers. But what it also did was, for folks who have difficulty getting to a VA facility, it gave them the possibility of getting a private sector provider for their care.

There have been some concerns expressed about whether that information is getting out to veterans as effectively as it should. There are