

Governor Phil Murphy

Governor Murphy and Senators Vitale, Cryan, Diegnan, and Lagana Announce Collaboration on Veterans' Services Reform

10/4/2023

"After thoughtful discussion, today we are announcing a conceptual agreement to pursue structural reforms to the delivery of veteran services in New Jersey. As highlighted in both the United States Department of Justice (DOJ) and the State of New Jersey Commission of Investigation reports, comprehensive reform – from ensuring we have adequately paid staff, to upgrading communication and physical infrastructure, to instilling a thorough understanding of best practices – is necessary.

Following the U.S. DOJ's report, we anticipate the appointment of a federal monitor to oversee improvements at our Veterans Memorial Homes and recognize that –as with the meaningful progress made with the New Jersey Department of Children and Families – a federal monitor can work with the State to create a thorough plan of correction, set clear targets for improvement, and hold us accountable with continuous and transparent reporting.

Further, we are actively working on legislation that will elevate the veterans' services currently provided by the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (NJDMAVA), including oversight of the Veterans Memorial Homes, to a veterans-centric cabinet level position, much like the federal model and that of several other states. This elevated departmental position will provide an ongoing, visible, institutionalized voice for veterans and their families at the highest level of government.

Finally, to provide an independent check on our commitment that will outlive any federal monitor, we will establish a veterans advocate to investigate complaints and ensure we are providing effective, appropriate, and timely responses to our most vulnerable veterans.

We anticipate that matters related to active members of the military will remain under the purview of the presently-named Department of Military and Veterans Affairs. The staff at NJDMAVA have made meaningful improvements recently, and these structural changes should not substantively change their individual roles. We intend to pursue these reforms in a way that is minimally disruptive to the service members and veterans served by NJDMAVA and the dedicated public employees who carry out NJDMAVA's work.

While it will take time to identify and address all the considerations that such wholesale change demands, we are committed to our goal and will work diligently to deliver thoughtful legislation in a timely manner. Our collective aim is ensuring the best possible care for our veterans, and we remain dedicated to this objective."

Governor Phil Murphy

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