









VA Monthly Media Analysis Brief

1 – 31 October 2013

Issue	Analysis	% of 374 Print Coverage	% of 29 Broadcast Coverage	% of 45 Blog Coverage	Overall Weekly Tone
Access to Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reporting on the government shutdown dominated a large amount of Access to Benefits coverage during the observation period. Coverage featured an increased amount of messaging from VA officials, predominantly Sec. Eric Shinseki. Comments focused on adverse results of the shutdown on VA benefits. An OIG report on patient deaths at a Memphis VA hospital prompted initial critical coverage. Continuing coverage became balanced later in the observation period. 	58 %	72 %	67 %	
Ending Backlog	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A surge in coverage was due to comments from VA on the impact of the shutdown on the Backlog. Coverage after the shutdown highlighted a reduced Backlog despite previous warnings from the VA that the Backlog would increase. 	9 %	17 %	11 %	
Veterans Homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coverage focused on a California law to help homeless Veterans. Reports of a drop in Veteran Homelessness and local Stand Down events drove supportive coverage. 	7 %	0 %	0 %	
Education/GI Bill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An AP report highlighted an increase in Veterans returning to College. 	2 %	0 %	0 %	
Women Veterans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A majority of coverage focused on VA centers offering increased breast cancer services likely due to October being Breast Cancer Awareness Month. 	1 %	0 %	0 %	
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reports on a congressional hearing that questioned former VA employees on wasteful conference spending prompted critical coverage. Critical coverage during the shutdown focused on VA spending on advertisements and artwork. 	23 %	11 %	22 %	



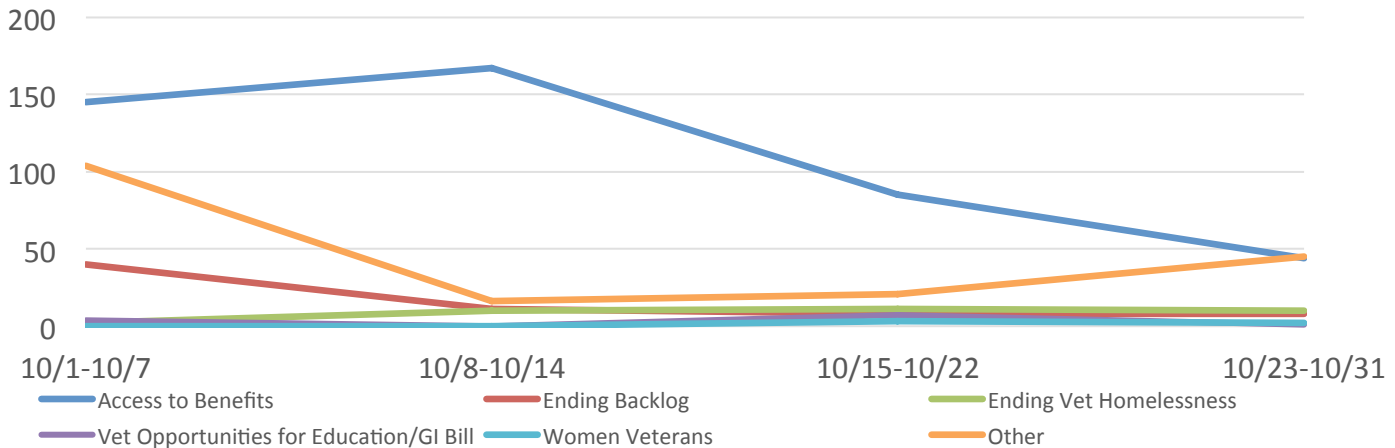
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Executive Summary

- A large majority of coverage discussed the government shutdown impact on VA services, which drove a surge in the volume of coverage around Sec. Eric Shinseki's congressional testimony.
- VA messaging appeared in a high volume of primarily print media on the impacts of the shutdown on VA services, delayed disability payments, and increase of the Backlog. Broadcast interviews featured VSO representatives that were critical of the government for allowing the shutdown.
- Criticisms reemerged of VA prescription medication use. Coverage appeared in high-circulation outlets such as *CBS Evening News* and a widely reprinted, in-depth investigation by the *Center for Investigative Reporting*. Dr. Robert Jesse offered VA messaging during his congressional testimony with reports highlighting his apology to Veterans.
- Backlog coverage shifted from warnings that the Backlog would increase during the shutdown to reports that it actually declined. Coverage criticized VA for warning it would increase when it in fact did not.
- Coverage of the Memphis VA hospital negatively portrayed the facility in connection to the series of three deaths. Reports later in the observation period included VA messaging from the hospital itself on actions taken in response to the OIG report
- Coverage of conference spending took the most negative tone in coverage. Congressional comments contributed to the majority of the criticism and highlighted a former VA director invoking his Fifth Amendment right.

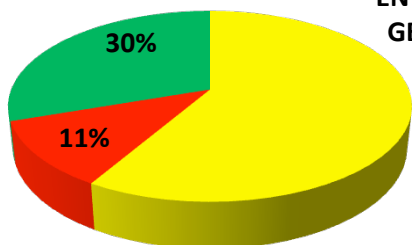
Volume Over Time by Issue*



* This chart allows for trend identification, and comparing volume of issues provides context for analysis.

Tone

[PERCENTAGE]



Overall Tone

Key Takeaways

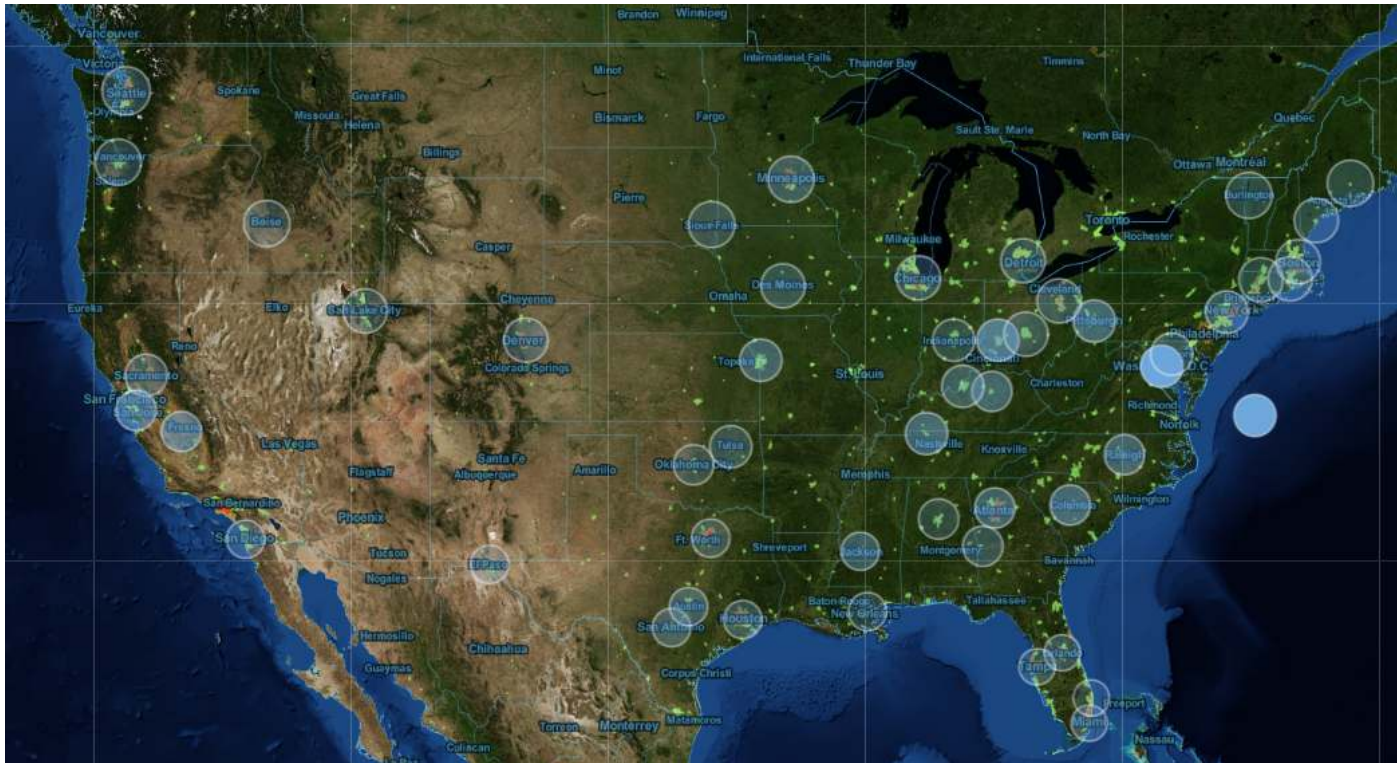
- A majority of coverage was balanced due to a higher than normal amount of VA messaging, particularly from Sec. Shinseki on the shutdown, countering critical comments.
- Direct messaging from VA officials countered a large amount of critical reports.



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Map of Media Coverage



**This map shows where all Tier 1 VA Media outlets are located and are reflected by the green circle. The size of the circle is related to the number of articles during the reporting period.*

[Click to View Interactive Map](#)

Please note that hyperlinks are active in full screen view.

Key Takeaways

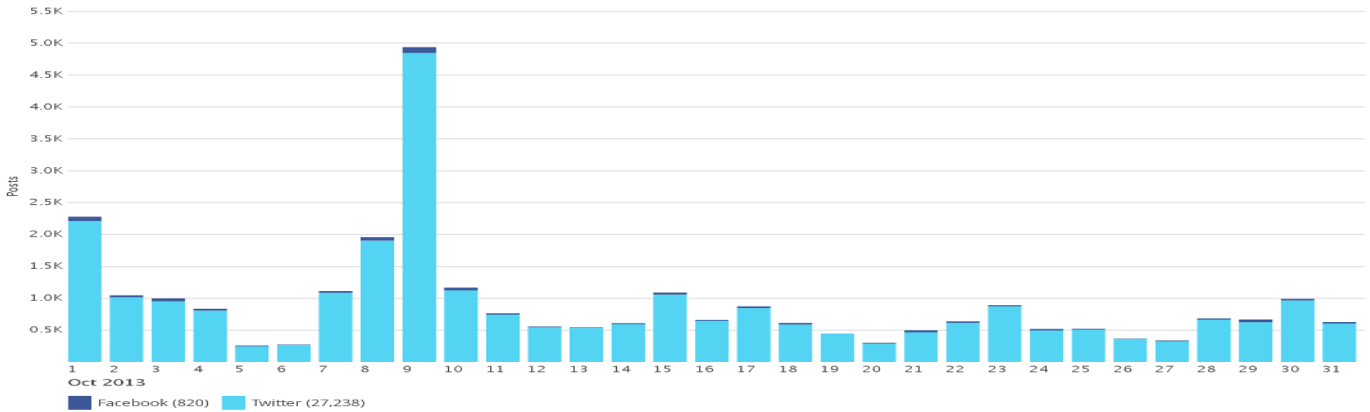
- Comments from congressional representatives, VSO leaders and VA officials on VA benefits impacted during the shutdown were focused in the Washington, DC area.
- Coverage on Veteran Homelessness emerged with reports on increasing funding for Veteran housing coming predominantly from California.



VA Monday Media Analysis Brief

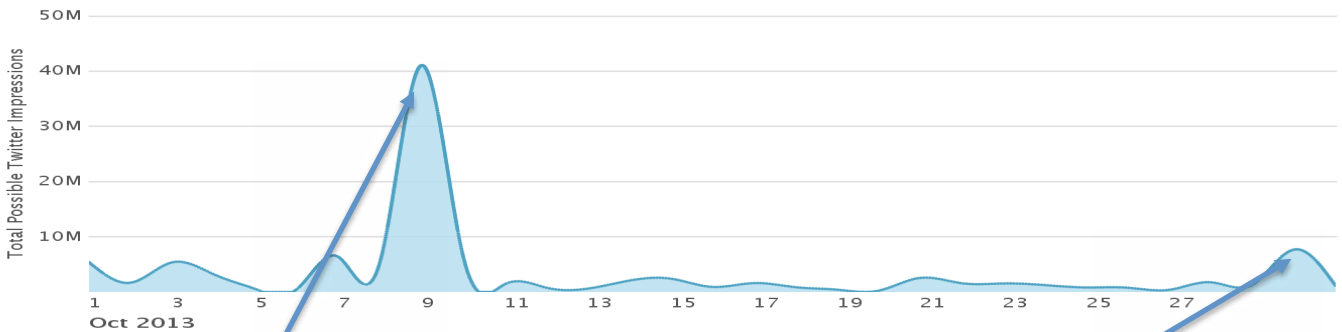
1-31 October 2013

Social Media Volume



Possible Twitter Impressions*

1-31 October = 110 Million



npr news
 NPR News
 @nprnews
 Washington, DC

57,995 tweets
 75,012 following
 2,033,687 followers

96

Shinseki: Shutdown Means Vets Will Not Get Benefits <http://t.co/1ZoVhwo02>
 posted on 10/9/13 1:22 PM EDT

Joe Klein @JoeKleinTIME

From health care to veterans affairs, Obama hasn't set the tone for the way the government operates | ti.me/19SQmUw

29 RETWEETS 12 FAVORITES

11:50 AM - 30 Oct 13

* Calculates the total possible reach of all Tweets mentioning veterans during the reporting period.

Key Takeaways

- Twitter posts increased to the highest recorded points since analysis began in February as a result of the Affordable Care Act's impact to Veterans on 1 Oct and the government shutdown on 9 Oct, while Facebook coverage maintained a moderate volume.
- Due to the provision of benefits during the shutdown and a congressional hearing, commentary from Sec. Shinseki and other VA spokespeople were featured heavily throughout social media coverage.