



VA Media Targeted Report - 15

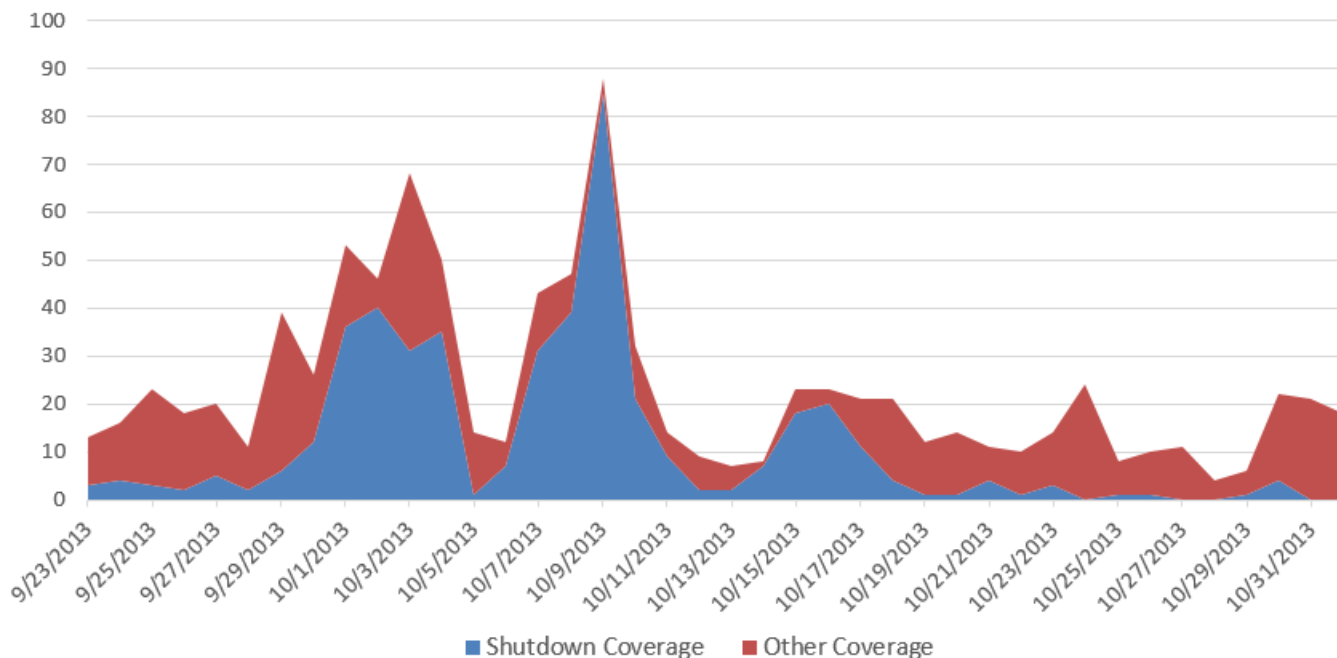
Government Shutdown

23 September – 1 November 2013

Executive Summary

- The recent government shutdown drove an increase in coverage on VA services and the claims Backlog, comprising half of all VA coverage during the observation period and over 70% of coverage during the government shutdown from 1-17 Oct. Lessons from the coverage may help shape messaging during a possible subsequent shutdown in January 2014.
- Media reports early in the observation period inconsistently reported continuation of VA benefits during a shutdown, specifically related to benefits payments and new claims processing.
- Expansion of the Backlog during a shutdown remained a prominent topic throughout the observation period. Concerns over an expansion were initially voiced by VSOs and were confirmed on 1 Oct by a VA statement and frequently cited tweet by Dr. Tommy Sowers. Coverage on 7 Oct refocused media attention on expansion of the Backlog with a VA statement that the Backlog had slightly expanded due to the shutdown. Critical reports emerged following an announcement that the Backlog actually decreased.
- Once VA messaging clarified disability and education benefits would be suspended in a prolonged government shutdown, reporting provided inconsistent timelines on an end to the shutdown in order to process 1 Nov payments.
- Spokespeople from VSOs played a key role in disseminating messaging to media outlets. The primary message across VSOs was frustration of being used as political “pawns.” The American Legion in particular provided frequent and high visibility commentary.

Volume of Coverage Related and Unrelated to the Government Shutdown



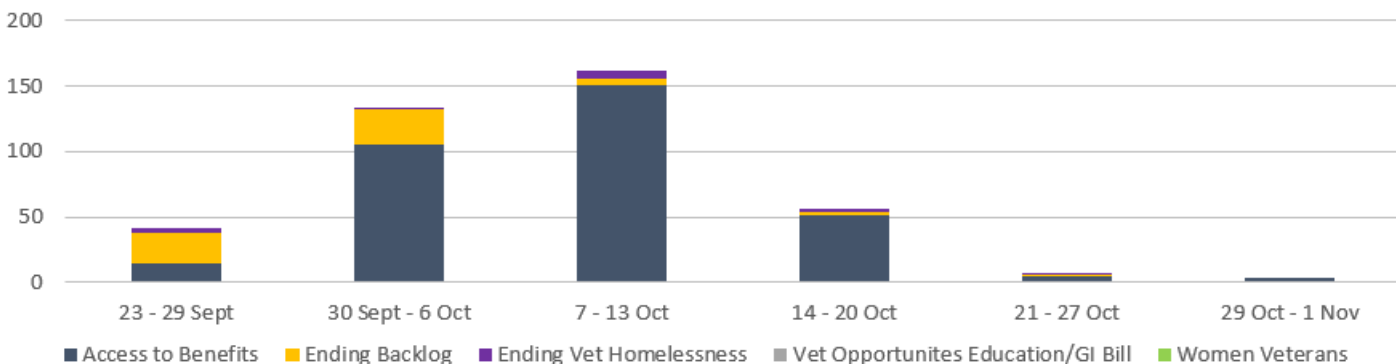


VA Media Targeted Report - 15

Government Shutdown

23 September – 1 November 2013

Traditional Media Volume and Category



Key Takeaways

- Reporting on benefits continuation was inconsistent early in the observation period. For example, *USA Today* reported on 26 Sept that “compensation claim processing and payment will continue even if the government shuts down.” Coverage shifted due to a 28 Sept telephone briefing to Congress stating that “all benefit checks it issues... will be disrupted if a government shutdown lasts for more than two or three weeks,” according to *The Washington Post*, which called it a “significant change from what the members had previously been told.”
- The 9 Oct testimony by Sec. Eric Shinseki surged the volume of reports on VA. While the testimony drove coverage of benefits suspension on 1 Nov, media reports on the deadline to avoid non-payment remained inconsistent. The testimony also highlighted expansion of the Backlog if the shutdown continued.
- Most coverage did not place blame for the shutdown on VA, instead directing criticism at Congress. A notable exception was a 9 Oct *Politico* article, which criticized “the decision by the Department of Veterans Affairs to furlough nearly 10,000 employees because of the ongoing government shutdown...”
- Critical coverage emerged regarding the Backlog when VA reported a decrease in the Backlog following the shutdown, countering previous messaging that the Backlog would expand.
- Coverage throughout the government shutdown generally included several issues in the same report, including continuation of healthcare services, expansion of the Backlog, and suspension of disability and education benefits.
- Coverage of Veterans protests emerged on 14 Oct, including the “Million Veteran March on the Memorials” and “The Veterans Coalition.” Coverage of the former was reported as being highly politicized and more focused on Veterans memorials instead of Veterans benefits, compared to The Veterans Coalition demonstration.
- The Veterans Affairs Field Guide to the Government Shutdown was a widely cited source of information. The resource was referenced across traditional media, specifically being cited in 13 articles, and was disseminated in social media.
- VSO representatives provided commentary in high-circulation coverage. Broadcast media featured Pete Hegseth of CVA on *Fox News* and Paul Reickhoff of IAVA on *MSNBC* and *CNN*, while print media most consistently included messaging from Peter Gaytan and Daniel Dellinger of the American Legion.

VA Media Targeted Report - 15



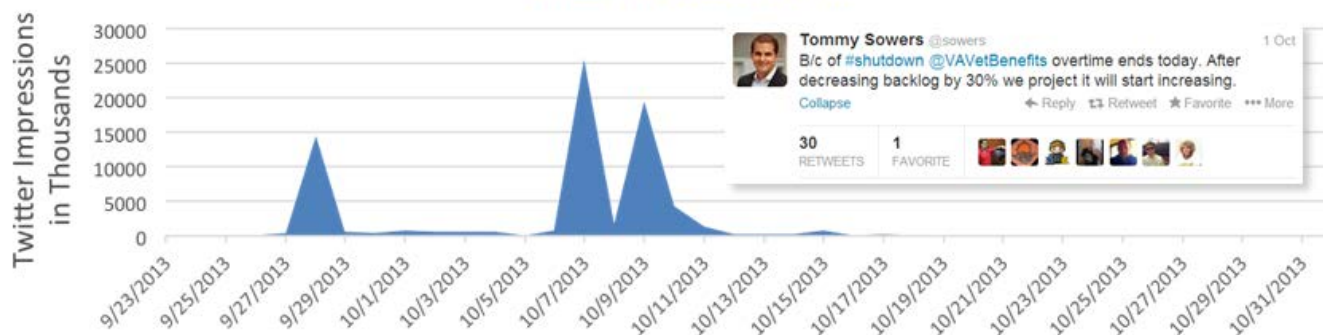
VA Media Targeted Report - 15

Government Shutdown

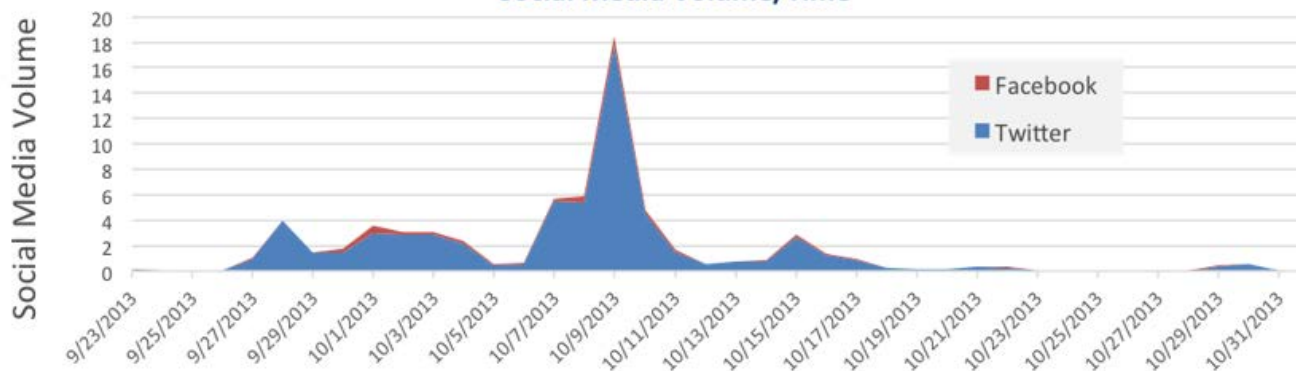
23 September – 1 November 2013

Social Media Analysis

Twitter Impressions/Time



Social Media Volume/Time



Key Takeaways

- Social media volume surged following Sec. Shinseki's congressional hearing testimony primarily due to traditional media outlets linking to reports. An article from *The Washington Post* in particular was frequently retweeted.
- Social media use facilitated VA messaging to penetrate coverage on the Backlog, as seen with Dr. Sowers' 1 Oct tweet on expansion of the Backlog. Several print outlets quoted the tweet, including *The Washington Post*, *USA Today*, *Clarion-Ledger*, *The Huffington Post*, and others. The 7 Oct announcement that the Backlog had slightly expanded due to the shutdown reinforced the messaging in print coverage.
- Members of Congress utilized social media to disseminate their commentary on the government shutdown. The conversation mirrored discussions in traditional media.
- While social media remained balanced regarding the Backlog following the government shutdown, traditional media criticized VA for warning the Backlog would increase when it actually decreased. Social media posts still linked to critical articles.
- VSOs did not appear as prominently in social media compared to traditional media, which did not follow a trend of effective social media use by the organizations.
- Facebook was utilized by VA regional offices to notify people on closings due to the government shutdown.

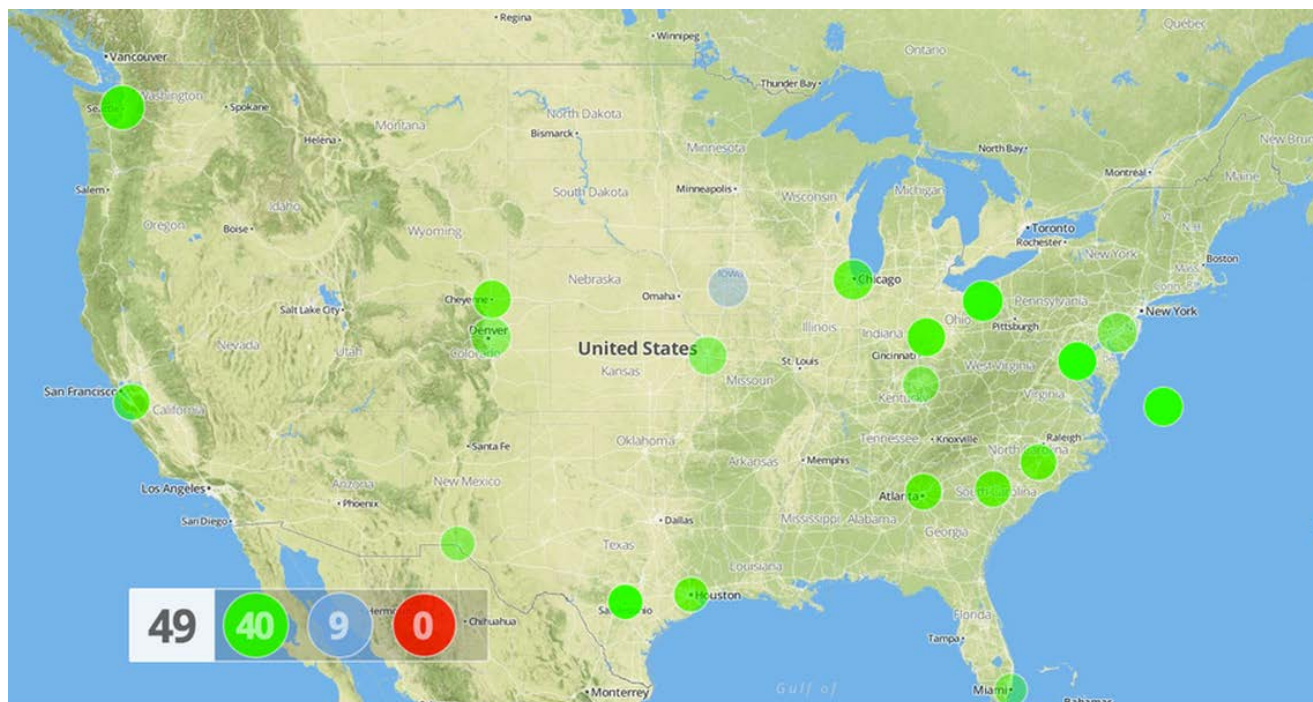


June - September 2013

Executive Summary

- Reports on mental health summits remained localized to the location of each individual mental health summit, with the exception of Nebraska. The Nebraska summit received coverage in Alaska and California.
- Coverage focused on multiple aspects of the summits as they pertain to care for Veterans and mental health providers. As an example, the *Wyoming Tribune-Eagle* highlighted a summit at the Cheyenne VA Medical Center. The report noted that the summits goal was “to provide awareness, resources and training for the community-based groups and other governmental agencies.”
- Coverage on the mental health summits highlighted services available to Veterans while providing opportunities to talk with outside mental health providers.
- A report from *San Antonio Express-News* highlighted many counseling groups, treatment centers and other organizations that worked with Veterans in breakout sessions to help with issues like legal services and access to mental health services.
- An *AP* report on a summit organized by the VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System saw a large amount of reprints in outlets such as the *San Francisco Chronicle* and the *Anchorage Daily News*.
- Seventy-five percent of coverage on mental health summits was supportive due to a high amount of direct commentary from top VA officials on the usefulness of the summits to improve care for Veterans.

Map of Coverage



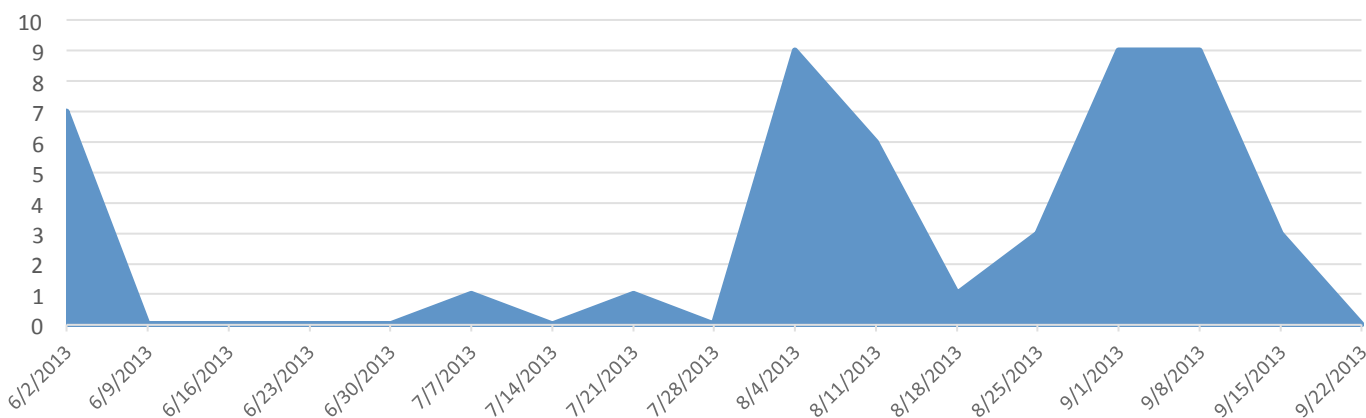


VA Media Targeted Report - 14

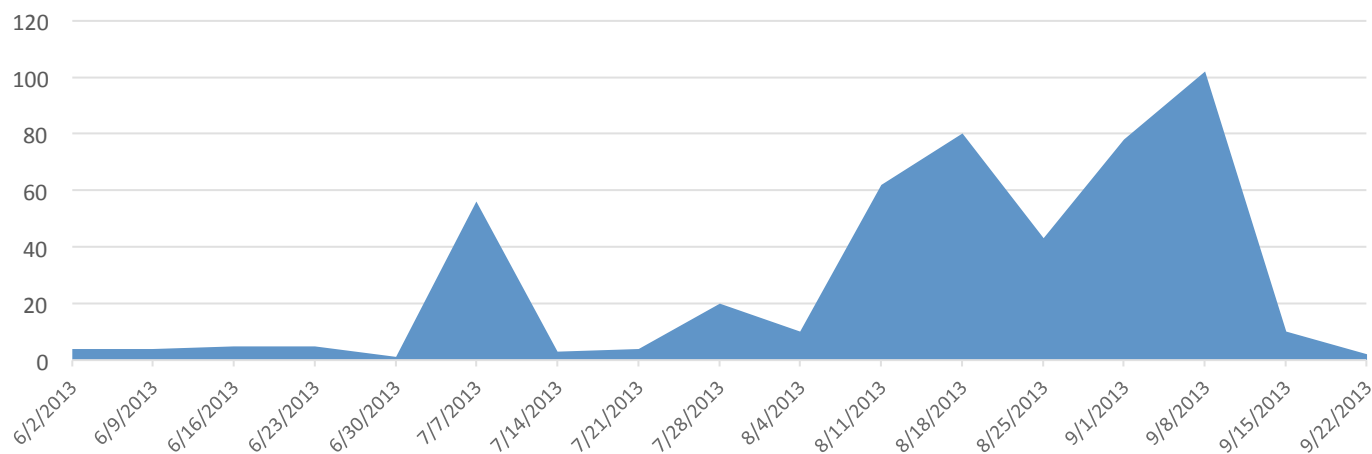
Mental Health Summits

June - September 2013

Traditional Media Volume



Social Media Volume









Key Takeaways

- Several users retweeted VA messaging on social media based on the location where a summit took place. The retweets allowed for a high visibility of messaging.
- The mental health summit in Lincoln, NE received a disproportionately large amount of coverage in both social and traditional media.
- Traditional news outlets were able to reach a wider audience and receive a larger proportion of coverage through social media posts. The posts included links to reports on summits occurring in respective areas.
- The White House kick-off of mental health summits appeared in a low volume of high circulation outlets, translating into a high social media reach.



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 %	



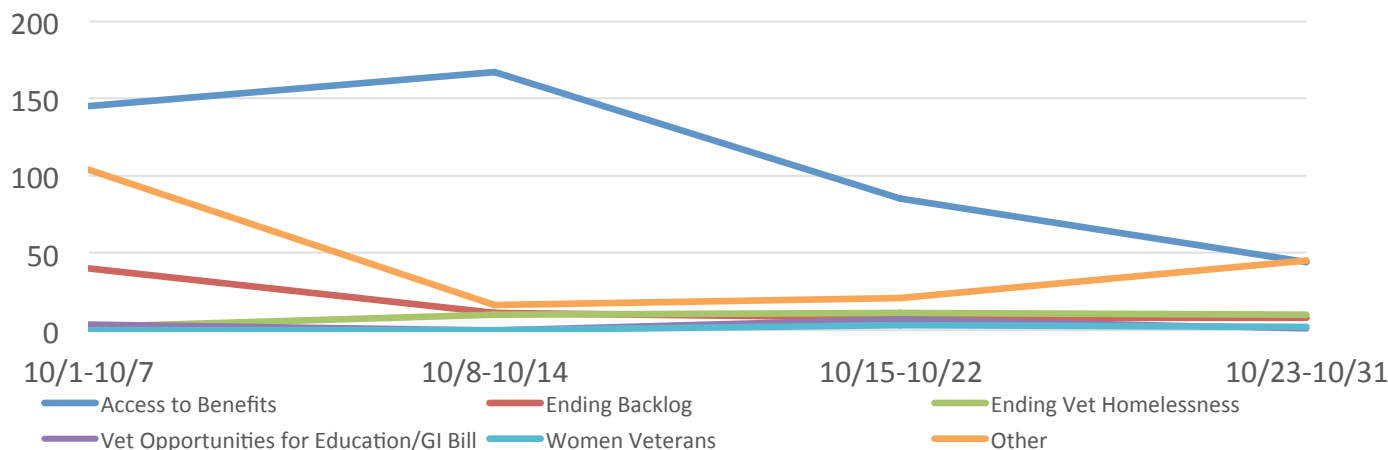
VA Monthly Media Analysis Brief

1 – 31 October 2013

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.

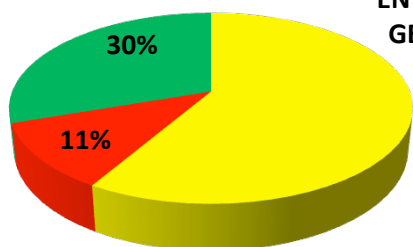
Volume Over Time by Issue*



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

Tone

[PERCENTAGE]



Overall Tone

Key Takeaways

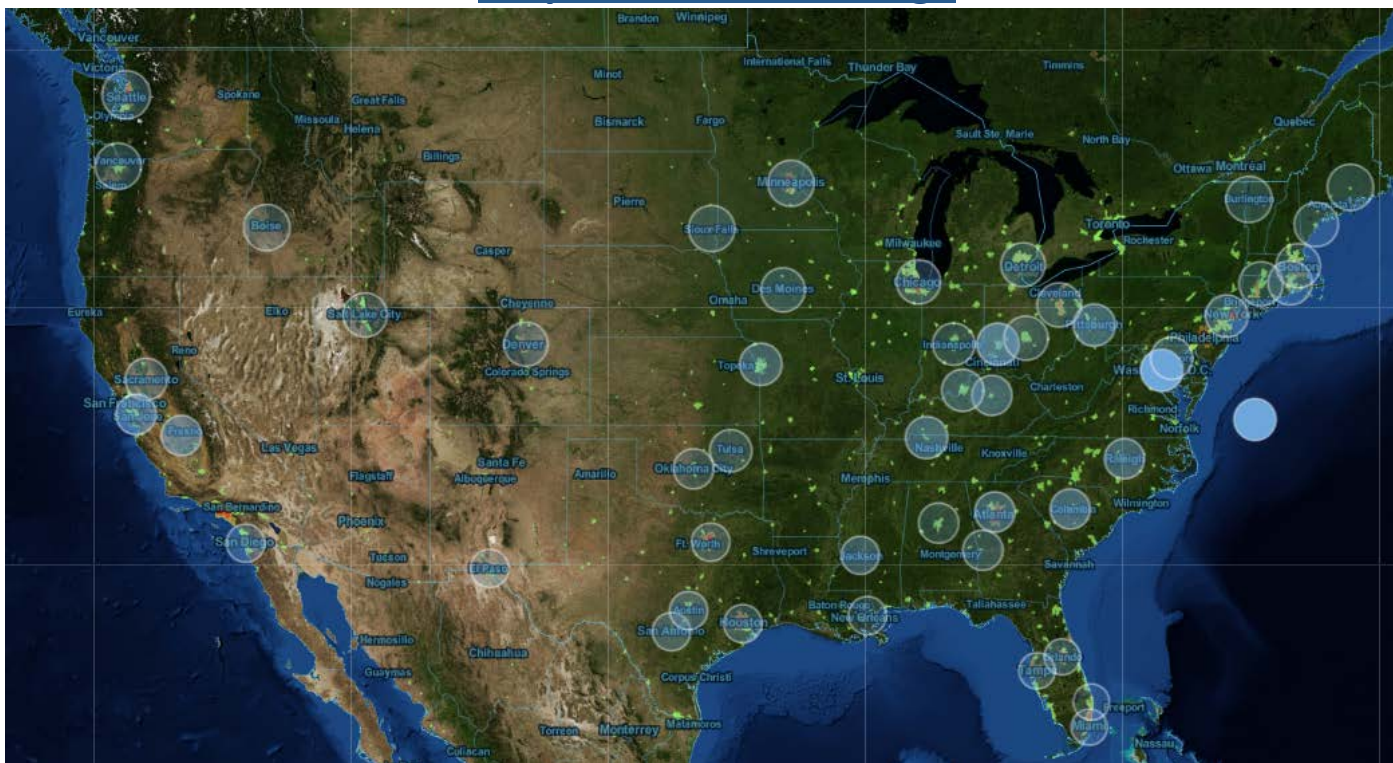
- A majority of coverage was balanced due to a higher than normal amount of VA messaging, particularly from Sec. Shinseki on the shutdown, countering critical comments.
- Direct messaging from VA officials countered a large amount of critical reports.



VA Monthly Media Analysis Brief

1 – 31 October 2013

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

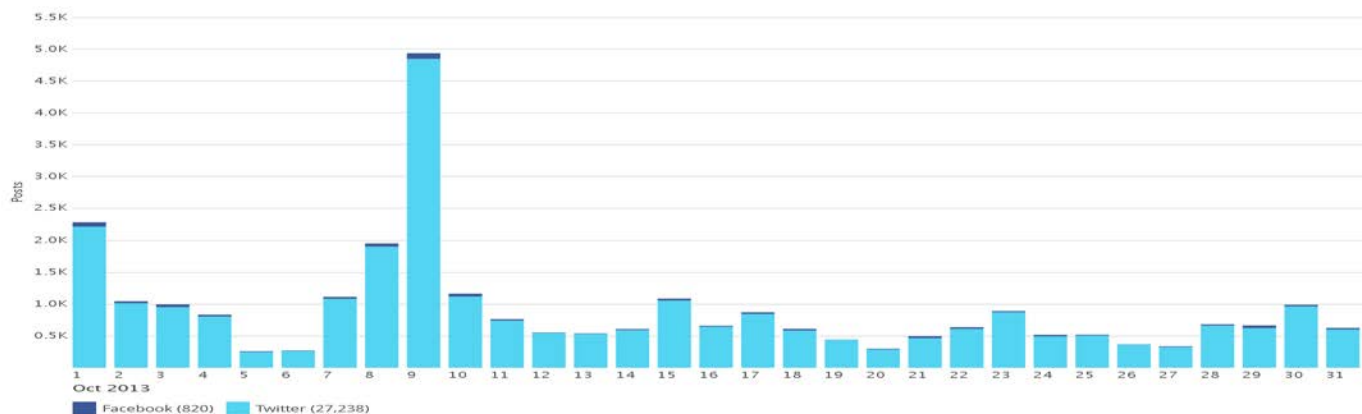
- Comments from congressional representatives, VSO leaders and VA officials on VA benefits impacted during the shutdown were focused in the Washington, DC area.
- Coverage on Veteran Homelessness emerged with reports on increasing funding for Veteran housing coming predominantly from California.



VA Monday Media Analysis Brief

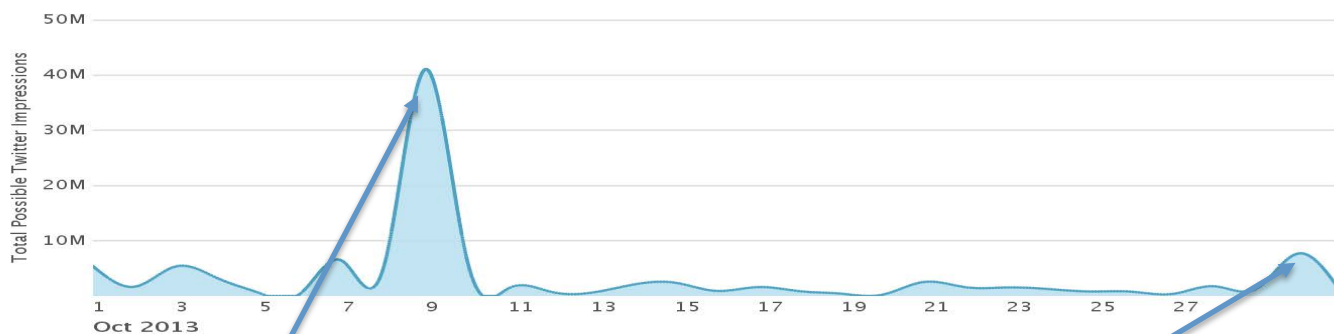
1-31 October 2013

Social Media Volume



Possible Twitter Impressions*

1-31 October = 110 Million



NPR News
@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/1ZoVhw002>

posted on 10/9/13 1:22 PM EDT

Joe Klein
@JoeKleinTIME

Follow

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

Reply Retweet Favorite More

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.



VA Monthly Media Analysis Brief

1 – 30 September 2013

Issue	Analysis	% of 771 Print Coverage	% of 14 Broadcast Coverage	% of 44 Blog Coverage	Overall Weekly Tone
Access to Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coverage of same-sex spousal benefits initiated the observation period, but transitioned off the topic on 6 Sept. The congressional field hearing in Pittsburgh expanded reporting on problems in regional facilities to nation-wide coverage. Care received by Aaron Alexis from VA prompted a high volume of coverage. Critical coverage of prescription drug overuse by VA emerged in reports from <i>CBS News</i> and <i>The Huffington Post</i>, continuing with an investigation by the <i>Center for Investigative Reporting</i>. Benefits being impacted by the government shutdown gained prominence at the end of the month. 	68 %	79 %	82 %	
Ending Backlog	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volume of coverage increased through the month, beginning with primarily local outlets discussing the appeals Backlog and ending with nation-wide discussions on impacts of the government shutdown. 	5 %	7 %	0 %	
Veterans Homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coverage highlighted VA services provided at an event in Tampa and progress made in Atlanta. 	6 %	0 %	5 %	
Education/GI Bill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The month sustained a low volume of coverage without trending with a particular narrative. 	2 %	0 %	2 %	
Women Veterans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supportive discussion on the expansion of mammogram screenings was mitigated by discussions of increased delays from diagnosis to treatment. An American Legion report called VA “male-centric” and made recommendations to improve access for Women. 	2 %	0 %	0 %	
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A variety of reports began with Veteran courts and transitioned to conference spending, mishandled records, and ended with the government shutdown. 	17 %	14 %	11 %	



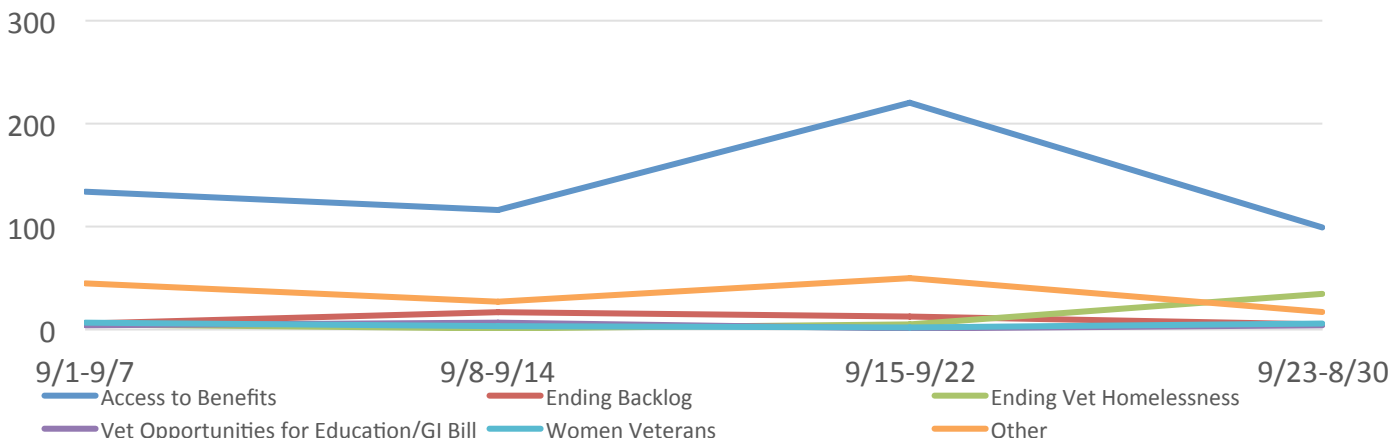
VA Monthly Media Analysis Brief

1 – 30 September 2013

Executive Summary

- A preponderance of coverage discussed VA care for Aaron Alexis, sustaining a high volume into the observation period, but dwindled after 19 Sept. Most reports quoted VA comments that Alexis received insomnia care, but not psychological care. Overall coverage increased from 19 – 25 Sept due to reporting on Alexis.
- Reporting on LGBT care continued nationally with outlets focusing on the availability of same-sex spousal benefits offered to Veterans following a federal judge's ruling that VA cannot deny these benefits. U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder's comments shifted the narrative to clarify the stance of the Administration, which included discussion of implications for VA benefits in particular.
- The congressional field hearing in Pittsburgh, PA connected coverage on Legionella, bonuses, and quality of care issues at the Atlanta, GA and Jacksonville, FL VA facilities. Legionella primarily drove coverage with frequent mention of bonuses to enhance criticism.
- Reports highlighted a trend of Veterans committing suicide in VA facilities. Coverage remained balanced with strong VA messaging and discussion of suicide prevention efforts. Reports also promoted the Crisis Hotline and noted September's designation as Suicide Awareness Month.
- With VA not being blamed for the government shutdown, it was portrayed as a widely-agreed upon essential service. For example, *AP* noted that VA has the highest percentage of employees considered essential at 95%; *NextGov* offered further details on which offices within VA had high numbers of essential personnel.
- Reports on the Backlog expanded in coverage as VA warned the Backlog will grow during a government shutdown. Progress VA has made in eliminating the Backlog was highlighted, while criticisms focused on Congress.

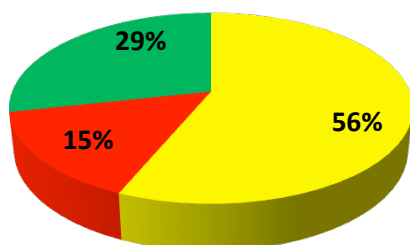
Volume Over Time by Issue*



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

Overall Tone

Tone



Key Takeaways

- Direct messaging from local VA spokespeople balanced critical coverage of the government shutdown.
- Critical coverage highlighted on the Navy Yard shooter and care received at VA facilities and subsequent comments from Sen. Schumer calling for mental health care reform at VA facilities.



VA Monthly Media Analysis Brief

1 – 30 September 2013

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

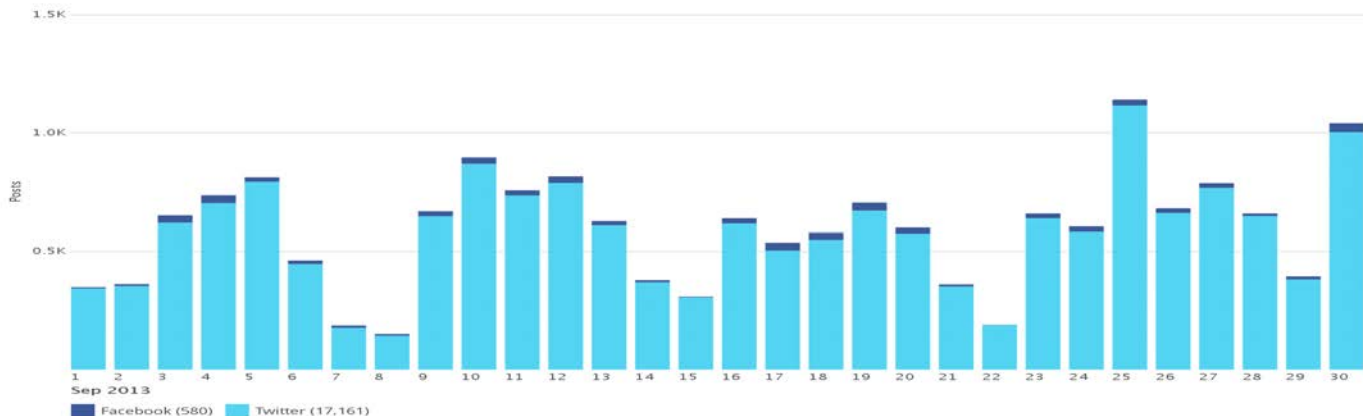
- Comments from the U.S. Senator from Maryland Barbara Mikulski on the Backlog targeted criticism at the Baltimore, MD office. The storyline had a low national impact.
- The Washington, DC metro region had a high portion of coverage discussing the provision of benefits to same-sex couples.
- Coverage of the government shutdown came predominantly from national outlets then distilled to local affiliates.
- A large portion of coverage originated from newswire reports, appearing cross the country.



VA Monday Media Analysis Brief

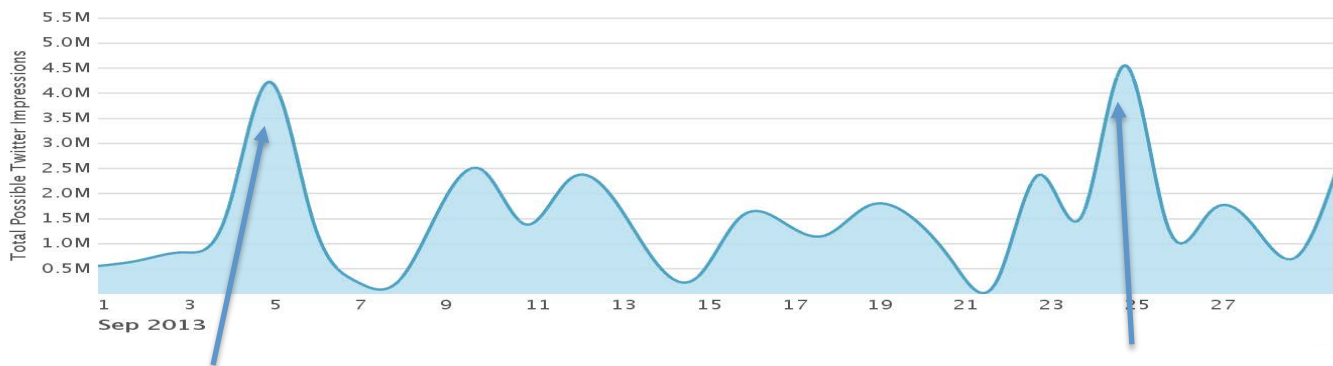
1 - 30 September 2013

Social Media Volume



Possible Twitter Impressions*

1-30 September = 45 Million



The Boston Globe
@BostonGlobe
Boston, MA

25,422
tweets

978
following

252,314
followers

96



USDOL
@USDOL
Washington, DC

8,776
tweets

244
following

110,888
followers

89

Same-sex spouses to begin getting Veterans Affairs benefits <http://t.co/Hk1L2K49Wz>
posted on 9/5/13 9:50 AM EDT

RT @craignewmark Today @ 3-4pm EDT: @USDOL's #VetsJobsChat will talk all things #education w/@deptvetaffairs @studentvets + others! <http://t.co/3DSXfdvg5P>
posted on 9/25/13 11:40 AM EDT

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

Key Takeaways

- Overall possible Twitter impressions decreased from 57 to 45 million compared to August coverage. Social media posts fluctuated throughout the period, with same-sex couple benefits and Veteran employment causing the greatest peaks in volume.
- In sequence, Facebook posts provided details on individual Veterans applying for disability benefits, decreases in the Backlog, Affordable Care Act compliance, and the impacts of a government shutdown on benefits.



VA Weekly Media Analysis Brief

7 – 13 November 2013

Issue	Analysis	% of 299 Print Coverage	% of 20 Broadcast Coverage	% of 18 Blog Coverage	Overall Weekly Tone
Access to Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coverage on VA malpractice lawsuits featured criticism from Rep. Jeff Miller and contributed to negative narratives of inadequate care and fiscal irresponsibility. Reporting featured a coalition of organizations that alleged VA discriminates against sexual assault victims. 	27 %	55 %	61 %	
Ending Backlog	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volume of Backlog coverage expanded to the highest levels since Pres. Obama pledged improvement at the DAV National Convention in August and almost entirely included VA messaging. 	14 %	30 %	6 %	
Ending Veterans Homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Despite a regular volume of coverage, reports appeared in high circulation outlets, driving potential viewership to its highest level on the topic since observation began. 	6 %	0 %	11 %	
Education/ G.I. Bill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The one millionth Post-9/11 G.I. Bill beneficiary drove coverage. 	6 %	5 %	11 %	
Women Veterans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coverage acknowledged the Columbus VA Ambulatory Care Center doubling the size of the women's clinic. The report included messaging from Women Veterans Program Manager Maureen Taylor. 	4 %	0 %	0 %	
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A widely republished AP story mentioned that a Veteran was unable to access the nearest VA hospital 70 miles away. AP detailed the events of an Iowan Veteran's death following his alarms being shut-off by the nurse. Critical commentary emerged in coverage of Veterans Courts, a traditionally supportive storyline. 	43 %	10 %	11 %	



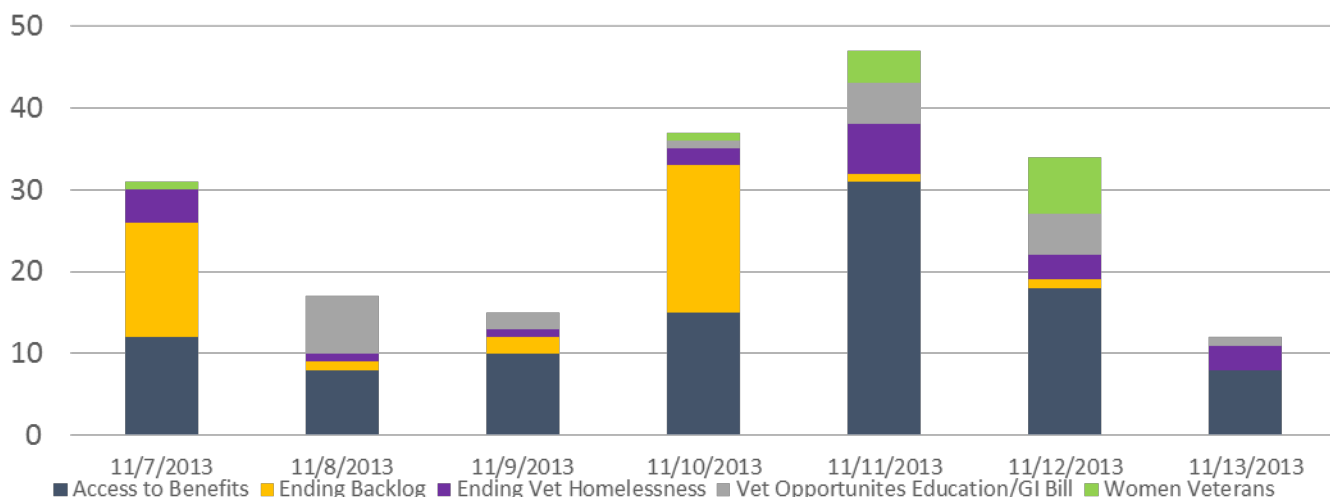
VA Weekly Media Analysis Brief

7 – 13 November 2013

Executive Summary

- Veterans Day drove an increase in overall coverage volume, garnering the highest level of reports observed in one day since monitoring began in February and the highest readership since coverage of the VSO conventions. Coverage spiked on Veterans Day following a lull over the weekend.
- The Backlog garnered 15% of weekly coverage and the highest volume of reports on the issue since Pres. Obama spoke at the Disabled American Veterans National Convention. Some articles remained negative, despite nearly all reports on the Backlog including VA messaging. Backlog coverage mirrored overall volume of coverage by beginning at high levels, dropping during the weekend, and spiking on Veterans Day.
- Sec. Shinseki's op-ed appeared in coverage nationwide promoting VA accomplishments and contributing to a supportive VA narrative. The article by Under Sec. Allison Hickey similarly pushed a supportive narrative, but focused on Washington D.C. readers.
- Coverage of comments by Pres. Obama focused on improving health care "for those not covered by the VA" and "[reducing] the mammoth backlog in disability claims so veterans can receive their benefits promptly." Sec. Shinseki was quoted, "Veterans Day is not just a one-day-a-year event. It's an abiding commitment every day of every year."

Volume Over Time by Issue*

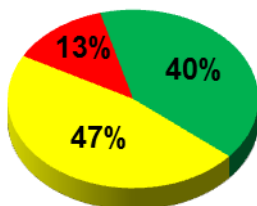


* This chart allows for trend identification, and comparing volume of issues provides context for analysis.

Overall Tone

Tone Key Takeaway

- Reports on Women Veterans were almost entirely supportive.
- While a portion of Backlog coverage contained negative commentary, most reports included VA messaging to mitigate criticism.
- Coverage of malpractice lawsuits contained a VA comment, but did not mitigate the overall criticism of reports.

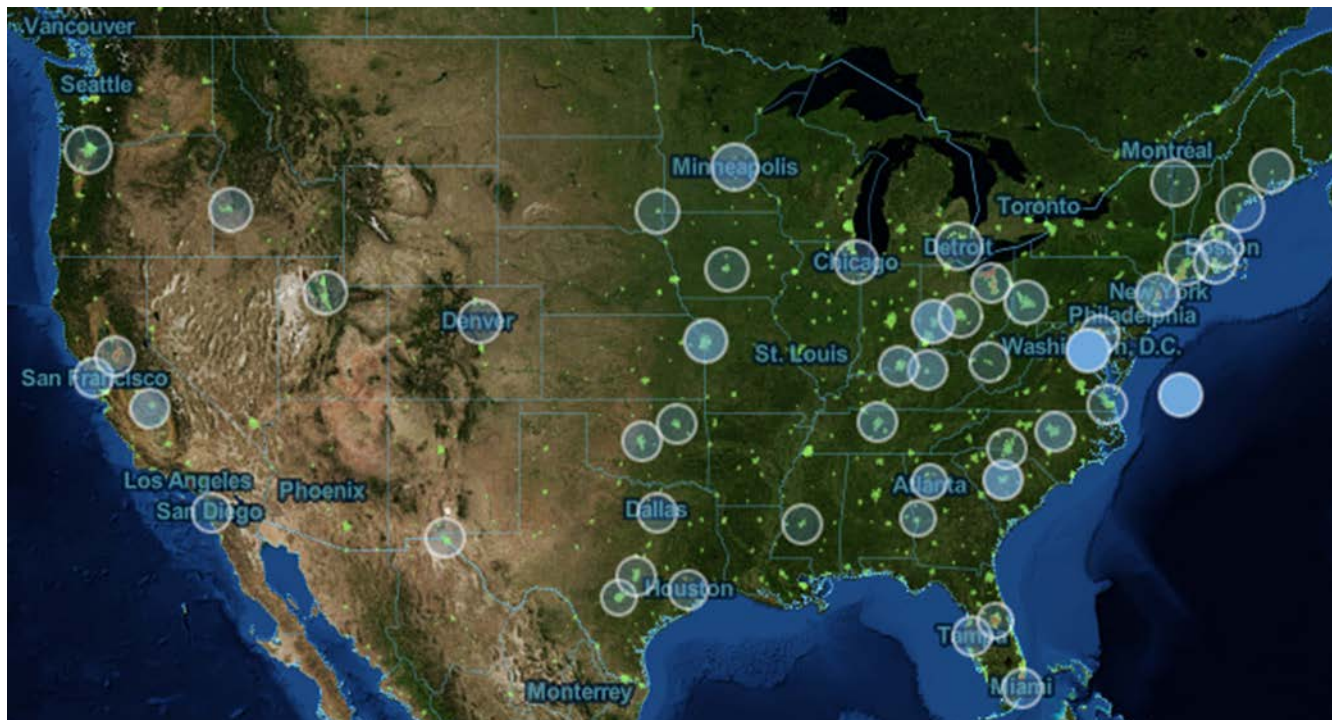




VA Weekly Media Analysis Brief

7 – 13 November 2013

Map of Media Coverage



Interactive map

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

Key Takeaways

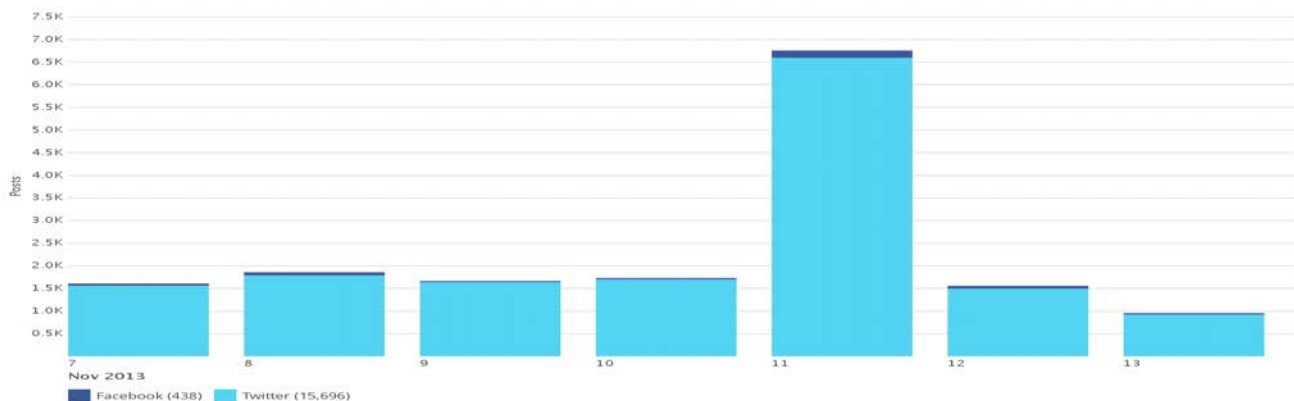
- Reports on malpractice lawsuits introduced a national narrative of inadequate care at local VA facilities. Coverage of a patient death in Iowa enhanced this criticism.
- Newswire coverage juxtaposed highly supportive and highly critical reports on innovations or inadequacies in Veteran care, which were consistently reprinted in local outlets nation-wide. Supportive coverage reached more media markets than critical coverage.
- In location-specific reporting, heavy critical coverage on the death of a patient at the Iowa VA hospital early in the period transitioned to infrequent criticism of the Jackson VA hospital.
- The American Legion's System Worth Saving Task Force held a meeting to discuss the Tennessee Valley Healthcare System, but coverage was not as high as a similar event last week in Pittsburgh.



VA Weekly Media Analysis Brief

7 – 13 November 2013

Social Media Volume



Twitter Impressions*

7 November – 13 November = 46 Million



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







Key Takeaways

- Social media coverage peaked on Veterans Day with the greatest number of social media posts recorded to date.
- Users such as *The Wall Street Journal*, prominent activist Michael Moore, and *CNBC* posted on a variety of historically critical topics – opioid abuse among Veterans, Backlog delays, and discussions on VA spending.
- Positive posts on Facebook included promotions of VA benefits, such as the G.I. Bill.
- The holiday prompted businesses such as Applebee's to offer products and services unrelated to VA; however, LexisNexis promoted resources related to VA benefits.



VA Weekly Media Analysis Brief

31 October – 6 November 2013

Issue	Analysis	% of 102 Print Coverage	% of 2 Broadcast Coverage	% of 10 Blog Coverage	Overall Weekly Tone
Access to Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>USA Today's</i> report on mental health appointment delays quoted Sen. Bernie Sanders criticizing the delays following the hiring of 1,600 new mental health professionals instead of supporting VA for taking action to resolve the issue. Coverage of the Pittsburgh legionella outbreak expanded based on actions by the American Legion, but it remained localized to Pittsburgh. The formerly critical topic of IT security reemerged due to messaging on statistics about the number of Veterans receiving care. 	46 %	100 %	40 %	
Ending Backlog	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Critical coverage on the Backlog declining during the government shutdown did not persist into the current observation period. 	1 %	0 %	0 %	
Ending Veterans Homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The majority of coverage on Homeless Veterans mentioned that VA representatives would provide services at a stand down, demonstrating an opportunity for VA messaging during those events. 	7 %	0 %	0 %	
Education/ G.I. Bill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coverage of Education maintained a long-term tendency to report on Veteran unemployment. 	3 %	0 %	10 %	
Women Veterans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reports on Women Veterans continues to connect with coverage on Homelessness, creating synergy of messaging for both issues. 	6 %	0 %	0 %	
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VA failure to protect historic buildings appeared in high volume outlets. Publications from several independent authors, as opposed to a single newswire report, shows high interest in the issue. 	37 %	0 %	50 %	



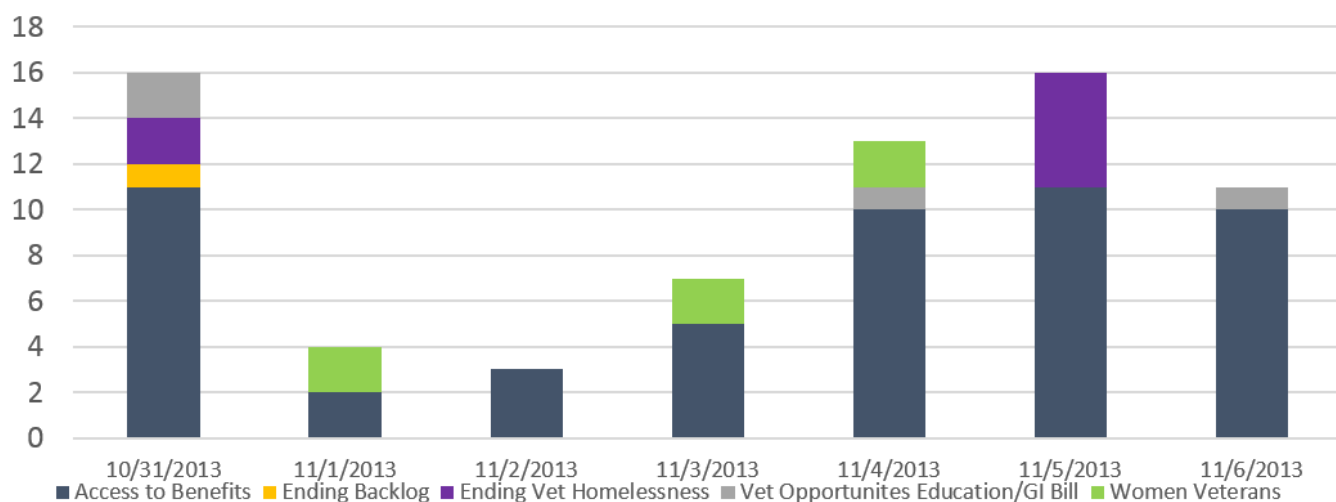
VA Weekly Media Analysis Brief

31 October – 6 November 2013

Executive Summary

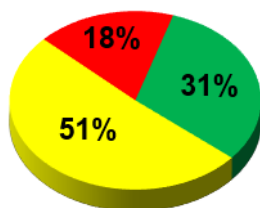
- VA failure to meet the internal goal of scheduling mental health patients within two weeks was reported in *USA Today* and was reprinted in several outlets. Messaging from Mary Scholhn, VA director of mental health operations, and Mike Davies, VA director of access, mitigated a potentially critical report, while the article remained negative in overall tone.
- Several high visibility outlets published criticism from a report by the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP). Coverage stated “VA does not notify interested community officials” as required by the National Historic Preservation Act and the National Environmental Policy Act.
- Legionella coverage increased in Pittsburgh as the System Worth Saving Task Force announced it will assess the VA hospital. The American Legion hosted a town hall where Veterans expressed reduced confidence, “fear and anger” as a result of the outbreak. VA messaging appeared minimally, but a previous critic of VA, Dr. Victor Yu, commented, “...VA’s ICUs are among the best...”
- Emerging coverage from the *International Business Times* initially reported on 1 Nov that “VA abruptly stopped releasing statistics on non-fatal war casualties,” while recently passing the mark of providing care for 1 million Veterans. The report quoted a Veteran calling it a “gross injustice,” without providing other VA messaging. Another article published on the same day by the same outlet reported VA deliberately denied holding back data due to an effort to increase IT security. *Military.com* also highlighted the issue.

Volume Over Time by Issue*



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

Overall Tone



Tone Key Takeaway

- While coverage of mental health scheduling, maintenance of historic buildings, and legionella in Pittsburgh all appeared negatively, most reports included VA messaging, increasing the percentage of balanced articles.



VA Weekly Media Analysis Brief

31 October – 6 November 2013

Map of Media Coverage



Interactive map

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

Key Takeaways

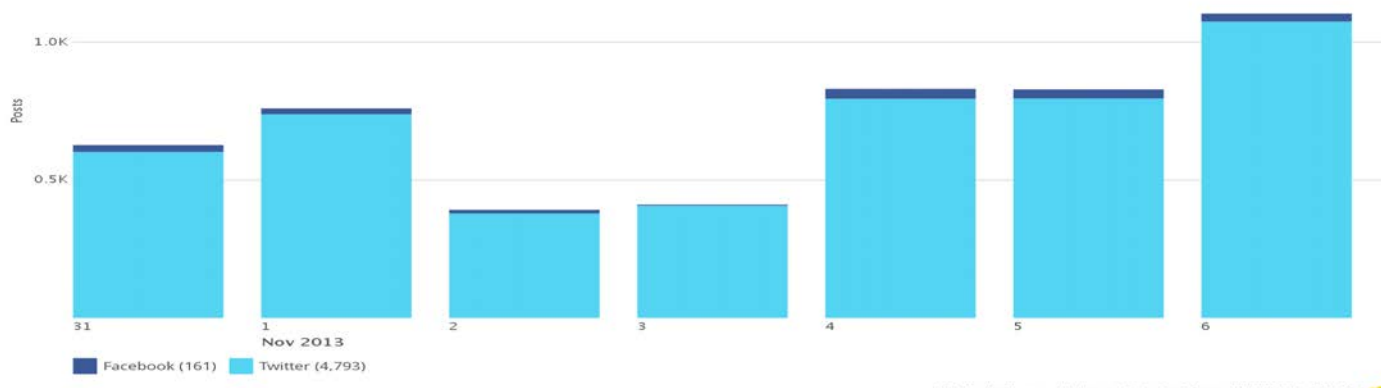
- Pittsburgh coverage was divided between two storylines. Critical coverage reported on the American Legion investigating the Pittsburgh VA hospital as part of the System Worth Saving Task Force. Supportive coverage featured a Female Veteran who was referred to the non-profit Veterans Leadership Program of Western Pennsylvania by VA.
- Georgia coverage highlighted a new VA clinic to be located in an eastern Indiana city. X-rays were highlighted because Veterans currently drive to the Dayton, OH facility for this particular service.



VA Weekly Media Analysis Brief

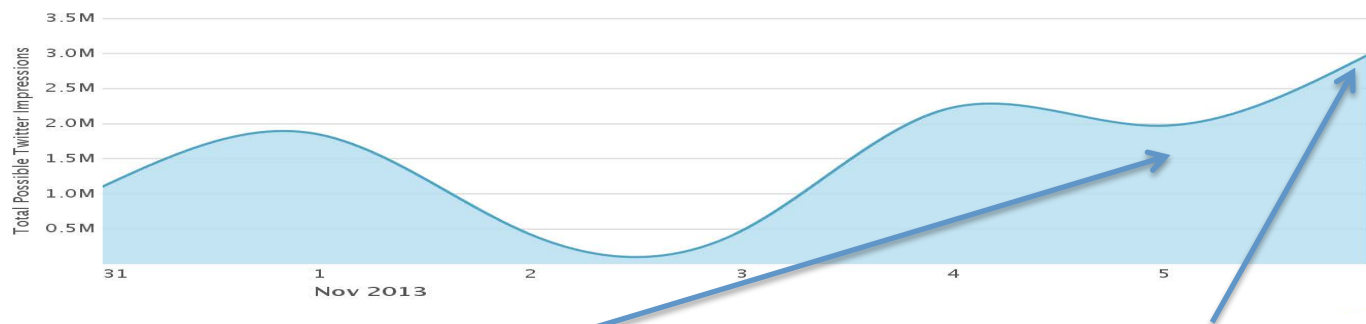
31 October – 6 November 2013

Social Media Volume



Twitter Impressions*

31 October – 6 November = 11 Million



Senator Joe Manchin

1,545
tweets

596
following

17,862
followers

84

@Sen_JoeManchin

RT @DeptVetAffairs RT @USArmy: Join us Wednesday, 11/6 from 12-1 p.m. for a @Facebook chat with @VAVetBenefits <http://t.co/tFo47Zz1A9> <http://t.co/CIFRqCuk7y>

posted on 11/5/13 2:57 PM EST



LeoShane

@LeoShane

Washington, DC

12,790
tweets

292
following

6,161
followers

72

.@USDOL Sec Perez says all departs need to be focused on aiding vets. "It's not just Shinseki's problem" <http://t.co/VeSDqpmjcm>

posted on 11/6/13 1:48 PM EST

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






Key Takeaways

- Twitter featured posts from members of Congress, including Sen. Joe Manchin, Sen. Bernie Sanders, and Sen. Jack Reed. This continues Sen. Sanders' trend of posting on actions taken by the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs.
- Leo Shane III of *Army Times* featured a quote by the Department of Labor Sec. Thomas Perez saying, "It's not just Shinseki's problem," when discussing aid for Veterans. The quote did not appear in traditional media.



VA Weekly Media Analysis Brief

24 - 30 October 2013

Issue	Analysis	% of 80 Print Coverage	% of 2 Broadcast Coverage	% of 4 Blog Coverage	Overall Weekly Tone
Access to Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coverage about the Memphis VA hospital appeared in 41% of Access to Benefits coverage, primarily through newswire reprints. Several reports included VA messaging on actions responding to the OIG report that investigated three patient deaths. Supportive coverage highlighted outreach by the Dorn VA Medical Center at a discussion on PTSD held by Blue Star Mothers. 	39 %	100 %	25 %	
Ending Backlog	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> House of Representatives legislative actions drove Backlog coverage. While multiple pieces of legislation passed, most reports featured the creation of a committee to investigate ways to end the Backlog. <i>Military Times</i> highlighted VA opposition to the effort. 	6 %	0 %	25 %	
Ending Veterans Homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cuyahoga Community College widely publicized a clothing drive for contributions to the resource center at the Louis Stokes Cleveland VA Medical Center. 	6 %	0 %	0 %	
Education/ G.I. Bill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No Coverage 	0 %	0 %	0 %	
Women Veterans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reports on Sandra Oxford of Tulsa Veterans Affairs comprised all coverage related to Women Veterans. She received the Oklahoma Woman Veteran of the Year award. 	2 %	0 %	0 %	
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nearly half of coverage did not fall into any of the standard categories for VA media topics. 	46 %	0 %	50 %	



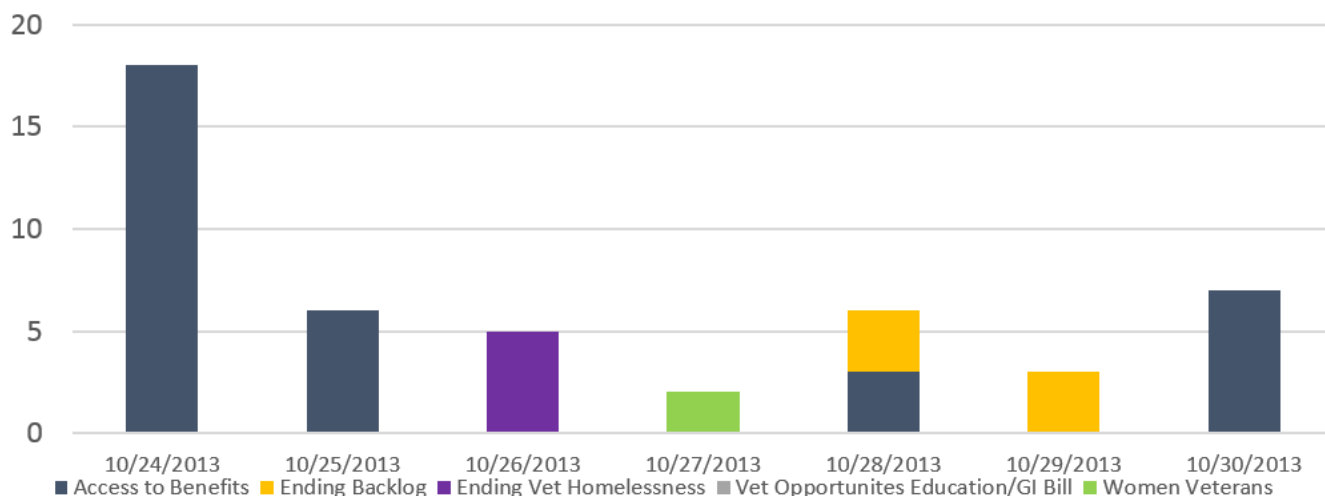
VA Weekly Media Analysis Brief

24 – 30 October 2013

Executive Summary

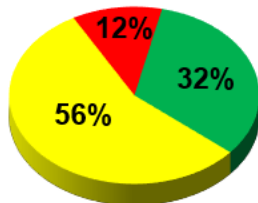
- Major topics in coverage were the Bay Pines VA shooting, the Memphis VA hospital, House legislation to create a committee on solutions for the Backlog, and expenses associated with VA conferences.
- Coverage of the Memphis VA hospital included messaging on actions taken in response to the OIG report, but often negatively portrayed the facility in connection to the series of three deaths.
- While the House of Representatives passed multiple bills related to VA, the most commonly reported effort was HR 2189 to create a committee investigating solutions for the Backlog. Reports highlighted VA opposition to the effort by citing that it would “slow down progress already being made.”
- Reemerging coverage of conference spending took the most consistently negative tone in coverage. Congressional comments contributed to the majority of the criticism.
- *Military Times* and *The Washington Post* both highlighted VA silence on the legislative effort to provide funding a year in advance to prevent suspension of services during any future government shutdowns.
- Coverage of the Veteran shot and killed at the Bay Pines VA hospital remained primarily localized in Florida.
- Overall volume of coverage has continued to decline over the past several observation periods.

Volume Over Time by Issue*



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

Overall Tone



Tone Key Takeaway

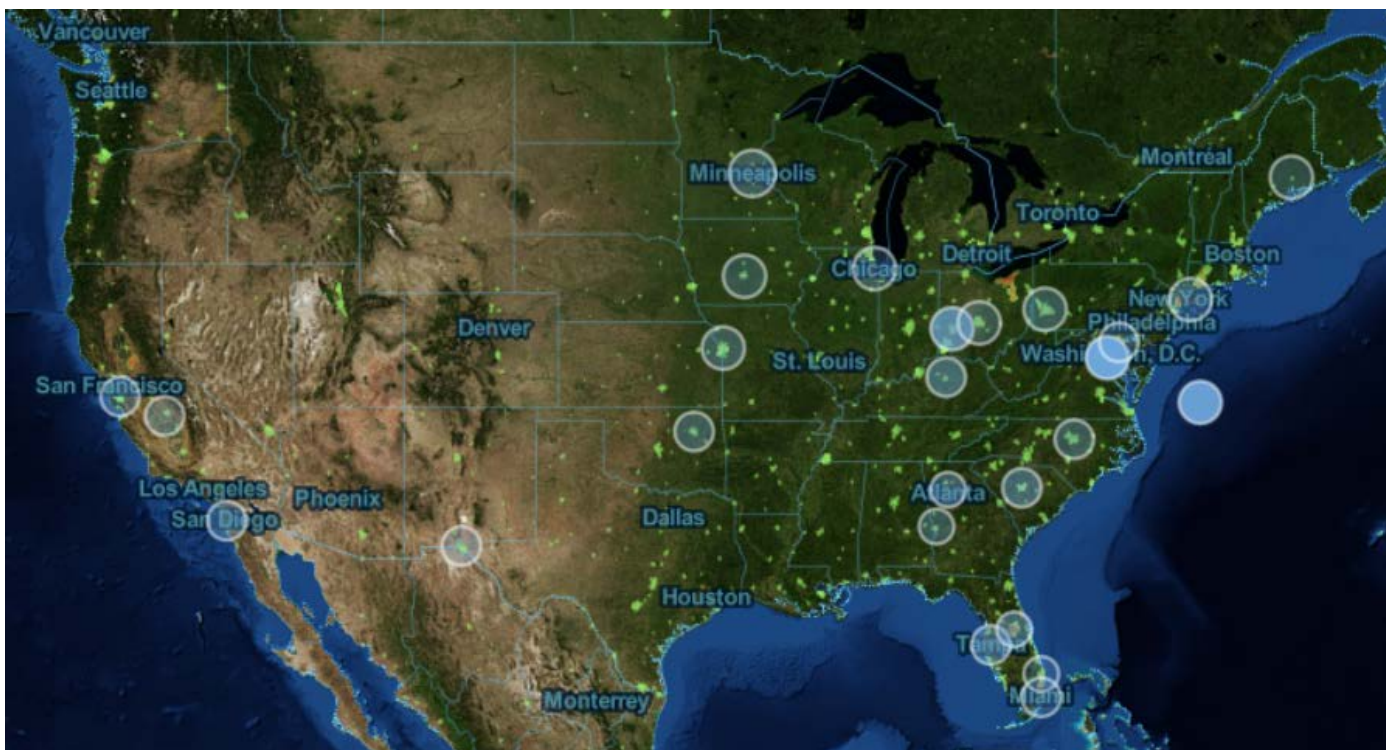
- Critical coverage declined compared to the previous observation period, while supportive and balanced coverage increased.
- Conference spending comprised 60% of the critical coverage. The topic contained minimal counter messaging by VA in coverage.



VA Weekly Media Analysis Brief

24 – 30 October 2013

Map of Media Coverage



Interactive map

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

Key Takeaways

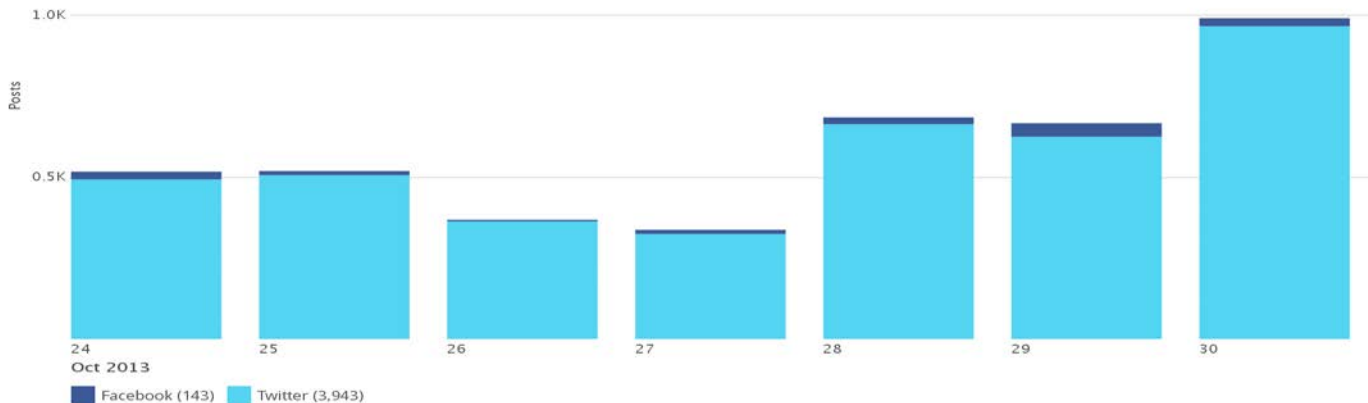
- One third of coverage in Florida discussed a man shot at the Bay Pines VA hospital after wielding a knife and claiming he had a bomb. The storyline primarily appeared in Florida, but also had individual reports in Dayton, OH and Washington, DC.
- DC-based coverage continued to contain the highest diversity of VA related topics in one location.
- Critical reporting was generally mitigated by balanced or supportive coverage in the same geographic location.



VA Weekly Media Analysis Brief

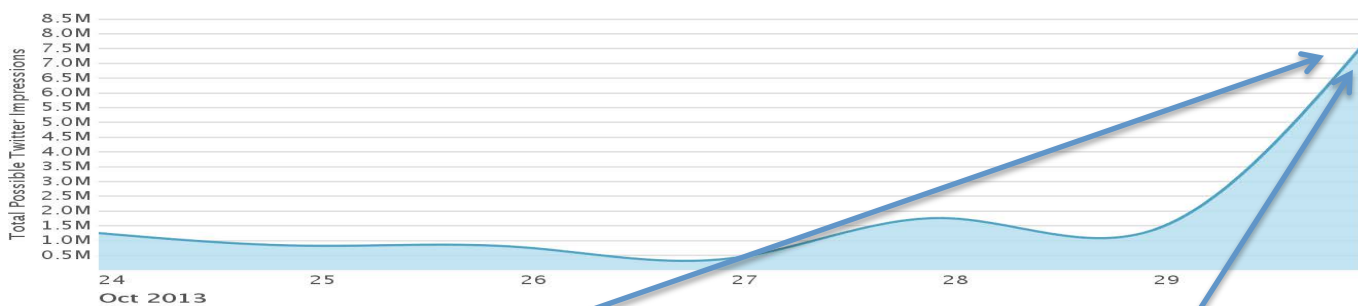
24 – 30 October 2013

Social Media Volume



Twitter Impressions*

24 – 30 October = 14 Million



Bernie Sanders

@SenSanders

Vernon, null

7,944

tweets

1,227

following

184,825

followers

84

TIME

TIME.com

@TIME

69,716

tweets

739

following

5,094,695

followers

99

At 2pmET Chairman Sanders will be holding a hearing of the #Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs to discuss pending #veterans legislation. 📺

posted on 10/30/13 1:07 PM EDT

RT @JoeKleinTIME From health care to veterans affairs, Obama hasn't set the tone for the way the government operates | <http://t.co/npGUHmDU8y> 📺

posted on 10/30/13 3:52 PM EDT

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

Key Takeaways

- A post by Time significantly increased Twitter impressions on 30 Oct. The tweet included a link to an article which mentioned the failed integration of VA and DoD records as one of several examples used to criticize Pres. Obama's Administration.
- Both traditional and social media have seen a decline in volume of coverage since the government shutdown. While social media volume has returned to an average level, volume of traditional media coverage remains low.
- Sen. Bernie Sanders continued to utilize social media to draw attention to VA related hearings. This type of informational tweet is common among members of Congress to raise awareness on events.



VA Weekly Media Analysis Brief

17 - 23 October 2013

Issue	Analysis	% of 90 Print Coverage	% of 2 Broadcast Coverage	% of 9 Blog Coverage	Overall Weekly Tone
Access to Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reemerging, high visibility coverage of burn pit claims mentioned the VA effort to build a burn pit registry, but reports did not focus on VA in particular. Efforts to reopen the ICU at the Roseburg VA appeared in a newswire that was reprinted across the country, an unusually wide reach for a local issue. 	48 %	100 %	78 %	
Ending Backlog	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residual coverage on the Backlog expanding during the government shutdown appeared early in the observation period but shifted with reports that the Backlog actually declined. 	8 %	0 %	11 %	
Ending Veterans Homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volume of coverage on Homelessness increased, primarily due to reprints of a report from <i>The News & Observer</i> on difficulty finding jobs. 	16 %	0 %	0 %	
Education/ G.I. Bill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A high visibility report featured the increasing number of Veterans attending college. 	7 %	0 %	0 %	
Women Veterans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coverage of Women Veterans remained localized to Baltimore, highlighting a “drastically increased” number of mammograms being performed. 	2 %	0 %	0 %	
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The California state Veterans Affairs Department loss of \$650k during a project to build an adventure park and tavern drove critical coverage. Volume of reports increased of individuals fraudulently receiving VA benefits. 	19 %	0 %	11 %	



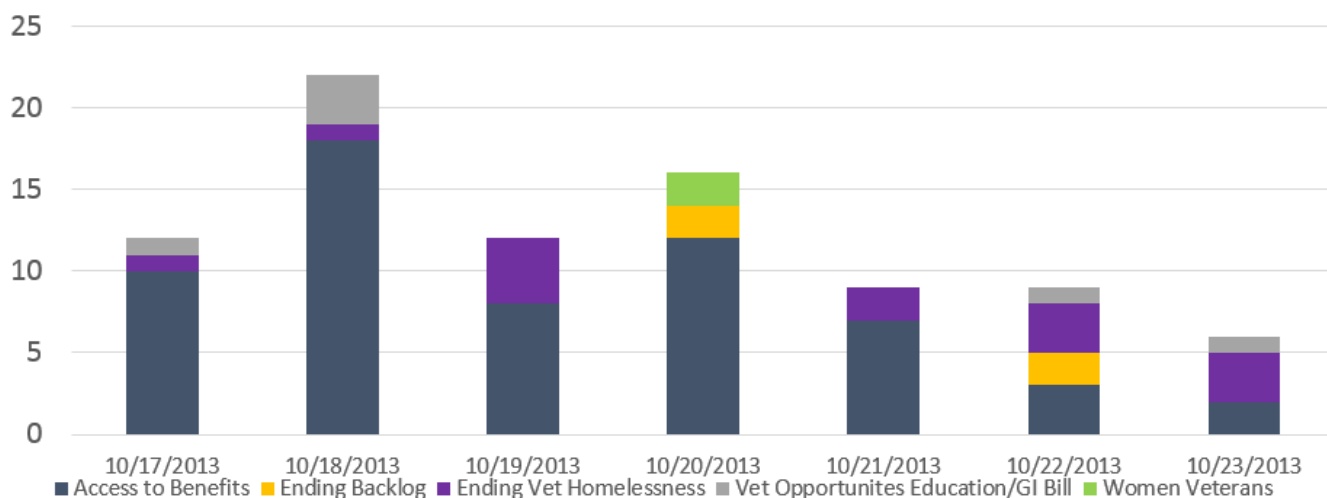
VA Weekly Media Analysis Brief

17 – 23 October 2013

Executive Summary

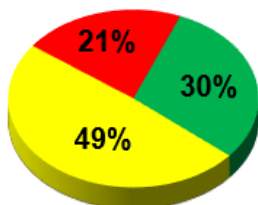
- While the last reporting period was dominated by the government shutdown, coverage during this observation period included a lower volume of reports on VA services reopening.
- VA use of prescription medication continued in a reduced volume of reports with two storylines. *Stars and Stripes* reprinted a *Charleston Daily Mail* report with statements from Beckley Veterans Affairs Medical Center spokespeople explaining why there are high levels of prescription medication locally. The messaging did not address high levels of prescription medication use by VA nationally, but did respond specifically to the *Center for Investigative Reporting* data showing high use at Beckley VA. Separate coverage on criminal misconduct involving illicit narcotics identified a VA hospital as a drug dealer's source of 500 Oxycodone pills each month. While high levels of prescription use have drawn criticism of inappropriate medical treatments, connecting VA hospitals to illicit narcotics builds the narrative of VA harming the broader community as well.
- Backlog coverage shifted from warnings of worsening during the government shutdown to reports that it declined. Reports did not appear grateful that the Backlog reduced during the shutdown; instead, coverage criticized VA for warning it would increase.

Volume Over Time by Issue*



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

Overall Tone



Tone Key Takeaway

- The portion of both supportive and critical coverage increased from the last observation period as reports focused more closely on VA actions instead of impacts on VA by the government shutdown.
- The adventure park and tavern project by the California state Veterans Affairs Department drove critical coverage.



VA Weekly Media Analysis Brief

17 – 23 October 2013

Map of Media Coverage



Interactive map

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

Key Takeaways

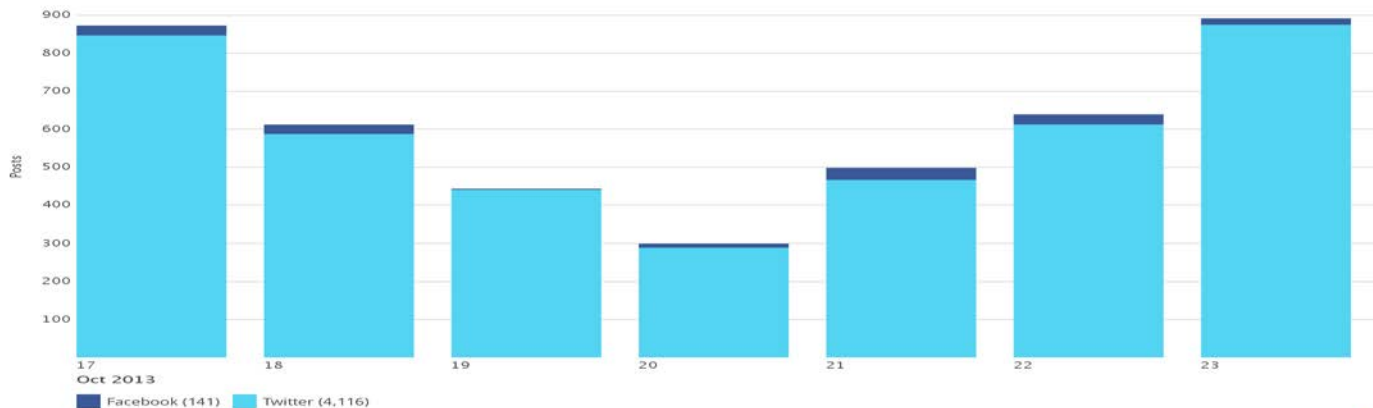
- The opening of a new polytrauma clinic at the Dallas VA Medical Center appeared in a large volume of local coverage. The coverage appeared strongly supportive, including messaging from Dallas VA spokeswoman Errikka Neroes.
- AP reported on legionella found at a Pittsburgh VA Hospital. Coverage appeared minimally in Pittsburgh despite a long-term focus on legionella in that location. The AP story was reprinted in Atlanta, GA, which deviated from legionella coverage typically remaining localized to Pittsburgh.



VA Weekly Media Analysis Brief

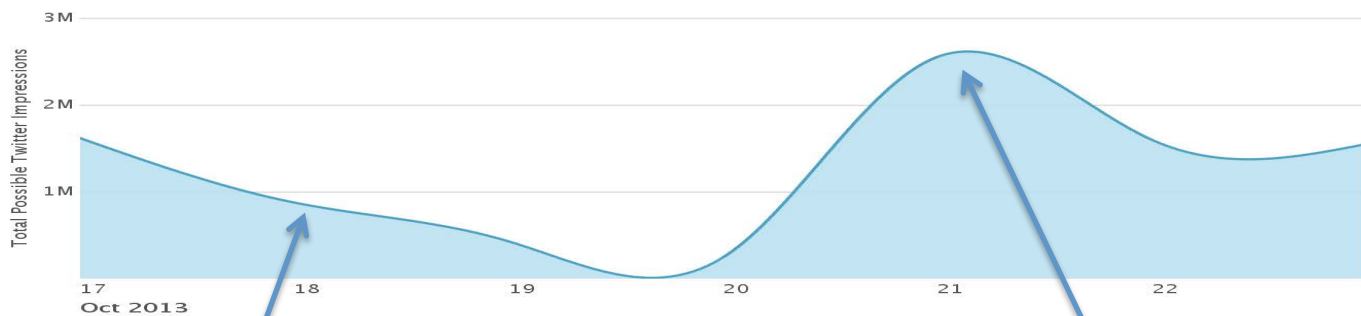
17 – 23 October 2013

Social Media Volume



Twitter Impressions*

17 – 23 October = 8.9 Million



Veterans Are Flocking To College As Wars Wind Down n.pr/19epNsC

Reply Retweet Favorite More



Veterans Are Flocking To College As Wars Wind Down
Veterans are flocking to college as wars wind down



The American Legion

4,038
tweets

481
following

22,557
followers

67

@AmericanLegion

Indianapolis, IN

,@DeptVetAffairs #claimsbacklog continued to drop this month despite 2-week government #shutdown. <http://t.co/30voDn0dXY> @VAVetBenefits

posted on 10/21/13 4:18 PM EDT

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

Key Takeaways

- Use of @DeptVetAffairs effectively expanded supportive *NPR* print coverage to a targeted audience. While the topic mirrored print media, volume of coverage on Opportunities for Education was disproportionately high in social media due to a high volume of retweets.
- Social media discussions of the reduced Backlog during the government shutdown appeared more favorably because authors did not criticize VA for claiming the Backlog would increase. However, posts linked to critical print articles.



VA Weekly Media Analysis Brief

10 - 16 October 2013

Issue	Analysis	% of 100 Print Coverage	% of 8 Broadcast Coverage	% of 8 Blog Coverage	Overall Weekly Tone
Access to Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coverage of Access to Benefits remained disproportionately high due to the wide variety of benefits discussed in coverage of the government shutdown. Criticisms reemerged of prescription drug overuse by VA, driven by a congressional hearing and investigation by the <i>Center for Investigative Reporting</i>. 	72 %	88 %	88 %	
Ending Backlog	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A few reports specifically focused on expansion of the Backlog due to the government shutdown, but many reports included a brief mention of the Backlog while discussing broader impacts by the government shutdown. 	4 %	12 %	0 %	
Ending Veterans Homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> California drove a majority of coverage with Gov. Jerry Brown signing a series of laws related to Veterans. 	8 %	0 %	0 %	
Education/ G.I. Bill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A majority of reports on Education were brief mentions in coverage on impacts by the government shutdown. 	2 %	0 %	0 %	
Women Veterans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A low volume of coverage lauded VA care for women with breast cancer at Milwaukee's Zablocki Veterans Affairs Medical Center. Reports noted breast reductions have tripled at the facility. 	1 %	0 %	0 %	
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Criticisms of information security violations by VA reemerged in multiple outlets. Negative coverage of procurements continued, but shifted from artwork purchases to furniture and advertisements. 	13 %	0 %	12 %	



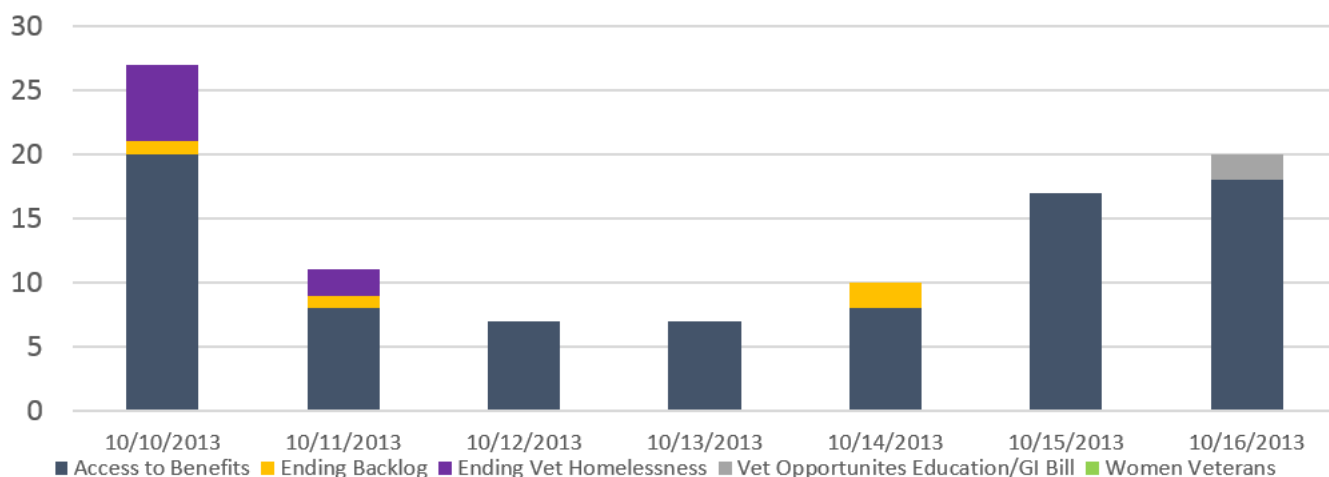
VA Weekly Media Analysis Brief

10 - 16 October 2013

Executive Summary

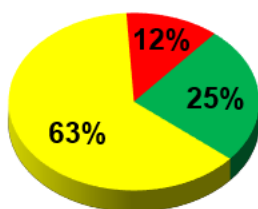
- The government shutdown continued to drive the largest volume of coverage related to VA. Congressional testimony by Sec. Eric Shinseki appeared in a large volume of reports in high circulation outlets early in the observation period. Coverage shifted to two protests by Veterans groups, detailing suspension of disability benefits and G.I. Bill benefits on 1 Nov and an increase in the claims Backlog. Tuesday's demonstration by The Military Coalition focused precisely on VA benefits, while Sunday's Million Vet March on the Memorials only briefly mentioned Veteran benefits and instead focused on memorial closures and criticisms of President Obama. Wounded Warrior Project garnered reports in high-circulation outlets by offering \$20 million to Veterans if their VA benefits are suspended during the shutdown. Pete Hegseth of IAVA maintained a strong presence in both print and broadcast media through the observation period.
- 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; coverage highlighted his apology to the Veterans attending the meeting on their prescription drug use.
- *The Daily Caller* and other outlets published criticisms of VA procurement, starting with end of fiscal year purchases of furniture and shifting to \$5 million spent on broadcast advertisements during the past six weeks. These reports followed criticisms of VA purchasing art.

Volume Over Time by Issue*



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

Overall Tone



Tone Key Takeaway

- Coverage sustained a balanced tone of VA while reporting the government shutdown. Reports placed blame for suspension of services on Congress, not VA.
- Critical coverage focused on medical records privacy violations and prescription drug use by VA doctors.



VA Weekly Media Analysis Brief

10 - 16 October 2013

Map of Media Coverage



Interactive map

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

Key Takeaways

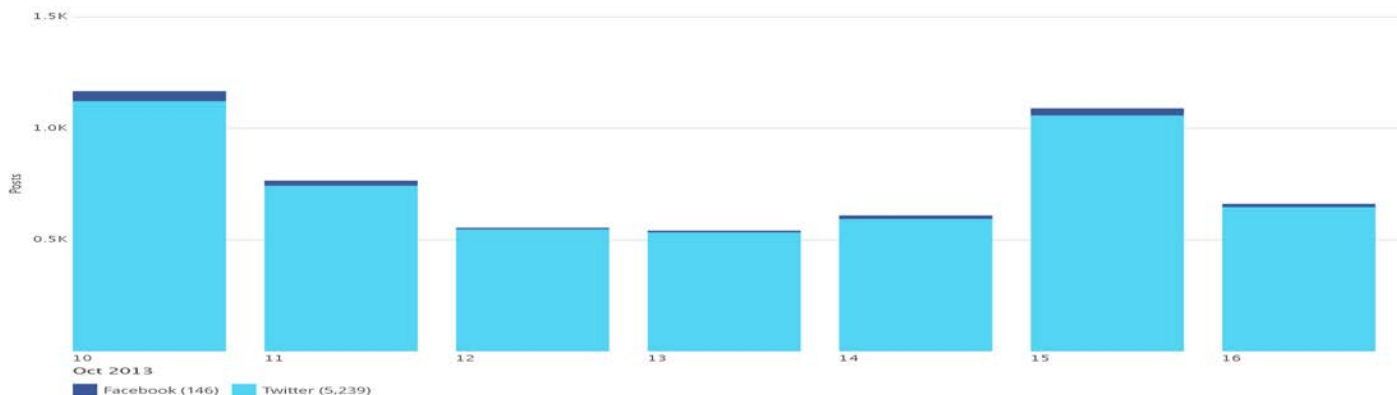
- While the volume of coverage decreased nationwide, coverage most significantly declined in Alaska, Florida, Kentucky, Missouri, North Carolina, Ohio, and Virginia.
- A preponderance of Homeless Veteran coverage appeared in California, maintaining a trend of interest on homelessness in California-based outlets.
- Pittsburgh had diverse coverage with reports on overuse of prescription medication, privacy violations, and continued coverage of Michael Moreland retiring. While the coverage had critical subject matter and commentary, several reports included comments from VA spokespeople.



VA Weekly Media Analysis Brief

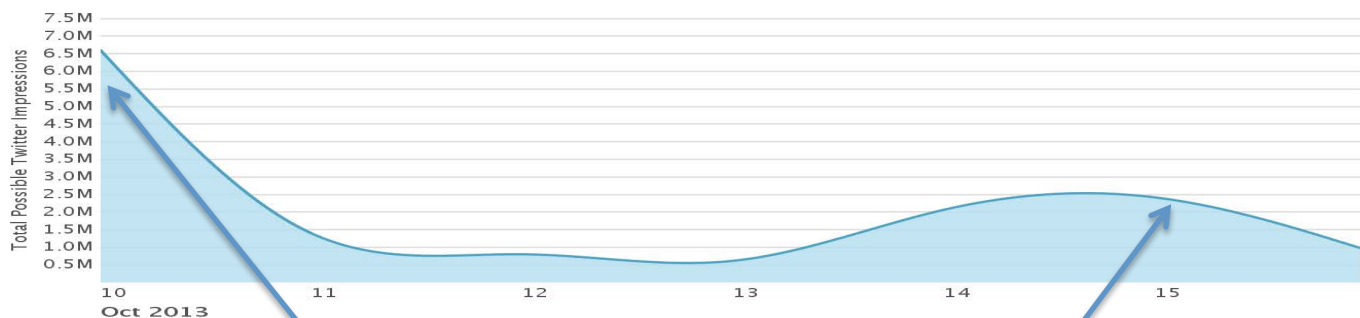
10 - 16 October 2013

Social Media Volume



Twitter Impressions*

10 – 16 October = 15 Million



CIR

@CIRonline
Berkeley, CA

8,952
tweets

3,684
following

13,095
followers

82



Operation College Promise · 562 like this
October 15 at 12:31pm ·

Like

Follow our live blog for updates on today's hearing on @DeptVetAffairs's rising prescriptions of opiate painkillers: <http://t.co/vAfG3RhVG1>

posted on 10/10/13 10:46 AM EDT

Shinseki: Shutdown 'directly threatens' vets <http://t.co/aUw7sxBPJm> via @sharethis



Shinseki: Shutdown 'directly threatens' vets
shares

The VA secretary explained the dire effects on America's veterans if the government shutdown continues.

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

Key Takeaways

- Social media use sharply decreased compared to the previous observation period, from 62 to 15 million possible Twitter impressions.
- Both Facebook and Twitter disseminated *The American Legion* article "Shinseki: Shutdown 'directly threatens' vets." While the article was published on 9 Oct, it continued to reverberate on Twitter through the observation period. Sec. Shinseki's statements from his congressional testimony were quoted throughout the report.
- Social media included discussions of prescription medications and impacts of the government shutdown as included in traditional media, but had a greater proportional emphasis on the shutdown.



VA Weekly Media Analysis Brief

3 - 9 October 2013

Issue	Analysis	% of 299 Print Coverage	% of 13 Broadcast Coverage	% of 19 Blog Coverage	Overall Weekly Tone
Access to Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Access to VA services and disability payments during the government shutdown dominated coverage. Reports mentioned many VA services, which drove the volume of coverage in the Access to Benefits category.	57 %	77 %	68 %	
Ending Backlog	<ul style="list-style-type: none">A high volume of coverage briefly mentioned escalation of the Backlog due to the government shutdown.This issue was the second most reported topic after delayed disability payment checks.Only <i>Stars and Stripes</i> noted VA may be using the government shutdown as an excuse for failing to eliminate the Backlog.	13 %	15 %	16 %	
Ending Veterans Homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The low volume of coverage focused on impacts to the Homeless Veteran population by the government shutdown.	1 %	0 %	0 %	
Education/ G.I. Bill	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Coverage highlighted challenges receiving college credit for military service in Ohio despite an executive order from Gov. John Kasich.	1 %	0 %	0 %	
Women Veterans	<ul style="list-style-type: none">No Coverage	0 %	0 %	0 %	
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Criticism of Regional Director Michael Moreland appeared in reports of his retirement.A widely circulated report on a new treatment option for serious gut infections featured commentary from a VA doctor.Criticisms of VA purchasing art sustained, but shifted to primarily commentary by Sen. Jerry Moran.	28 %	8 %	16 %	



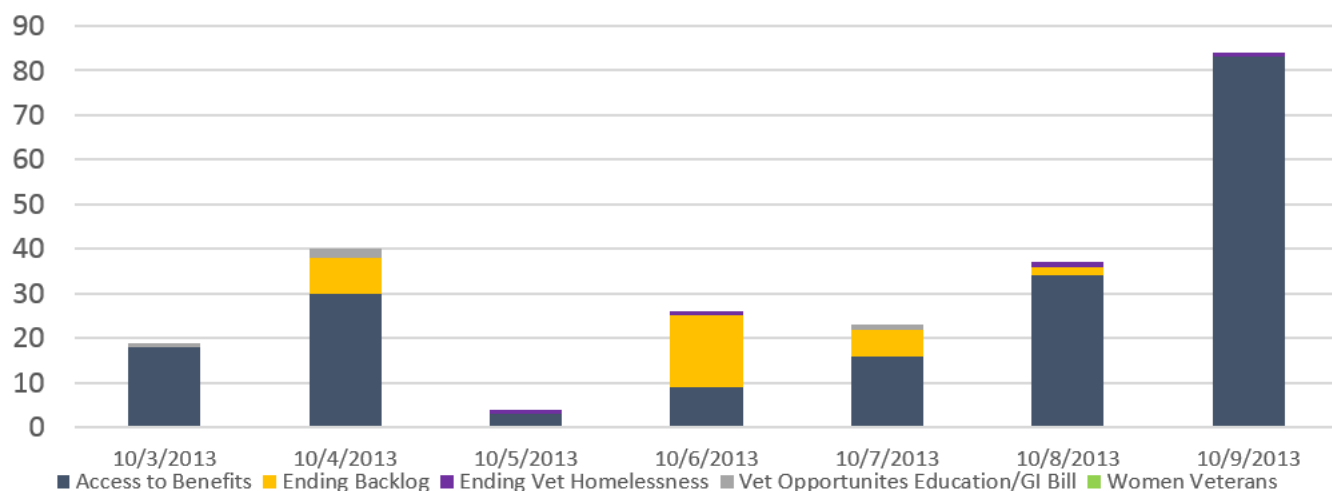
VA Weekly Media Analysis Brief

3 - 9 October 2013

Executive Summary

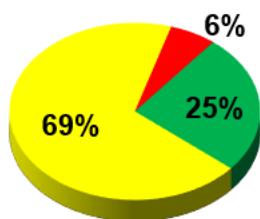
- A preponderance of coverage discussed the government shutdown impact on VA services, which drove a surge in the volume of coverage around Sec. Eric Shinseki's congressional testimony. Benefit checks not being distributed generated the most coverage, but reports also highlighted issues such as the expansion of the Backlog, delays in iEHR system construction, national cemetery burial services, and G.I. Bill benefits.
- Outlets maintained inconsistent reports on the deadline to fulfill 1 November disability payments. The last observation period reported mid-October through the week of 21 October, while this observation period reported late-October through 1 November; several reports also remained vague, using terms such as "much longer," "later this month," and "continues."
- 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, primarily Pete Hegseth of IAVA. VSO groups criticized Veterans being used as "pawns" in a political struggle.
- A high volume of coverage highlighted the storyline of death benefits. Reports typically quoted Sec. Shinseki's congressional testimony or Fisher House Foundation's support in VA hospitals.

Volume Over Time by Issue*



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

Overall Tone



Tone Key Takeaway

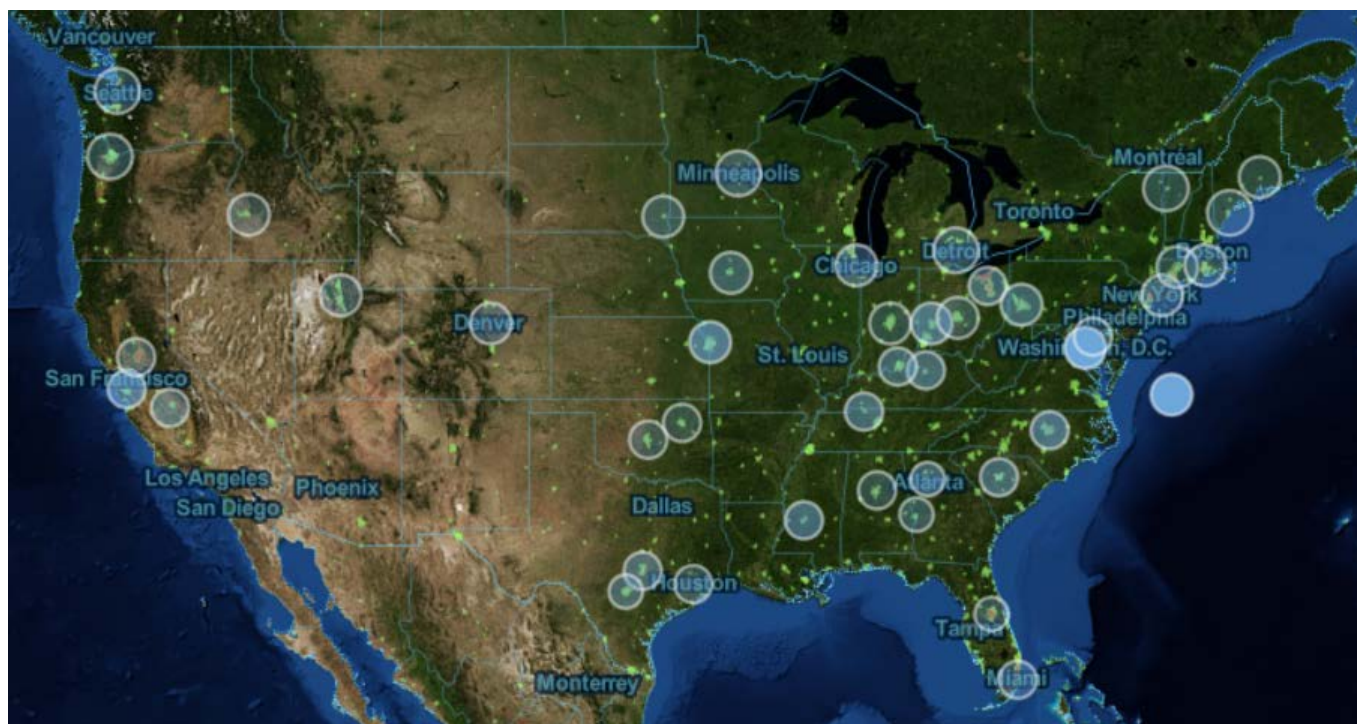
Most reports refrained from blaming VA for suspension of services during the government shutdown, generating a large percentage of balanced reporting. For example, *NBC* reported, "VA was forced to furlough..." A notable exception was *Politico*, which reported, "The decision by the Department of Veterans Affairs to furlough... has drawn the ire of veterans..."



VA Weekly Media Analysis Brief

3 - 9 October 2013

Map of Media Coverage



Interactive map

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

Key Takeaways

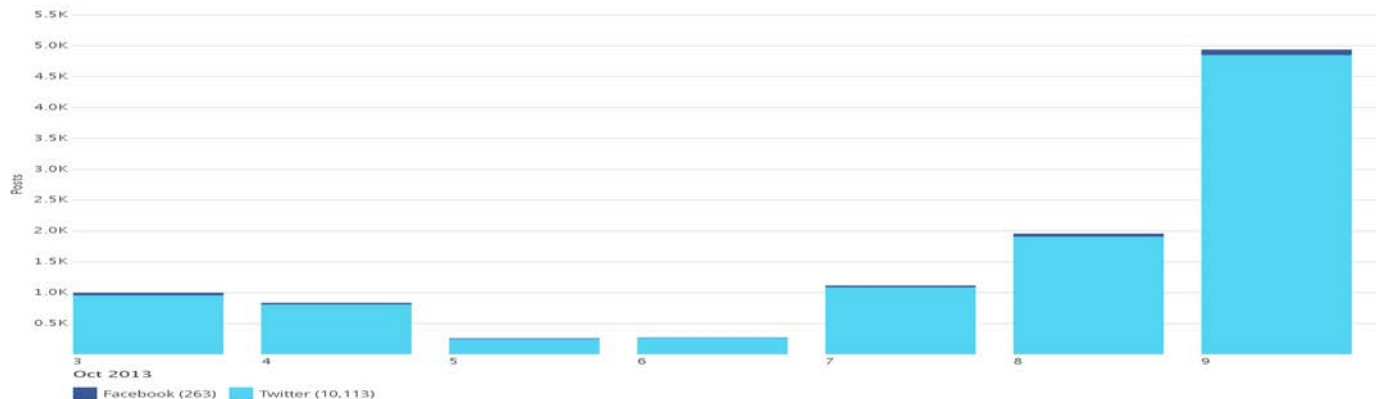
- The retirement of VA Regional Director Michael Moreland appeared in localized coverage from Pittsburgh outlets. Reports criticized the director's bonus, lack of accountability, and the Legionella outbreak in Pittsburgh VA facilities. Media attention on the government shutdown may have mitigated a higher volume of nationwide coverage on his retirement, but the government shutdown was not a major issue in Pittsburgh media.
- Paul Rieckhoff published an article in *New York Daily News* discussing New York specific issues around the disproportionately high Backlog and Veteran Homelessness. The criticism was tempered by supportively commenting on use of the G.I. Bill and Veteran Courts.
- Storylines on the government shutdown did not appear to trend regionally. National outlets and newswires with nationwide readership drove coverage.



VA Weekly Media Analysis Brief

3 - 9 October 2013

Social Media Volume



Twitter Impressions*

3 - 9 October = 62 Million



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

Key Takeaways

- Twitter coverage surged for Sec. Shinseki's congressional testimony. The increase was primarily due to traditional media outlets utilizing social media to expand their audience. An article from *The Washington Post* in particular was retweeted many times.
- Social media coverage mirrored traditional media with a focus on benefit payments and the Backlog; however, other issues in traditional media were generally omitted.
- VSOs were not as prominent in social media compared to traditional media, a shift from previous utilization of social media to reach out to Veterans.
- Facebook was utilized by VA regional offices to notify people on closings due to the government shutdown.



VA Weekly Media Analysis Brief

26 September – 2 October 2013

Issue	Analysis	% of 103 Print Coverage	% of 8 Broadcast Coverage	% of 9 Blog Coverage	Overall Weekly Tone
Access to Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A large proportion of coverage focused on the government shutdown and impacts on Veteran benefits. An <i>AP</i> report noted that because the VA is an essential agency only a small amount of services are impacted. Sen. Chuck Schumer called for an overhaul of mental health care at VA facilities. 	63%	38 %	45 %	●
Ending Backlog	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coverage suggested that the shutdown could slow the progress on disability claims. 	5 %	38 %	10 %	●
Ending Veterans Homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A large portion of coverage was from an <i>AP</i> report on the progress of eliminating homelessness among Veterans in Atlanta. 	5 %	0 %	0 %	●
Education/ G.I. Bill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A critical report focused on VA reinstituting funding for a Veteran's family. 	2 %	0 %	0 %	●
Women Veterans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coverage on a program offered through the Los Angeles VA is aimed to help homeless Women Veterans. A critical report focused on inadequate resources in Indiana due a cancelled conference. 	3 %	0 %	0 %	●
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Numerous critical reports focused on VA end of year spending on art. 	16 %	25 %	45 %	●



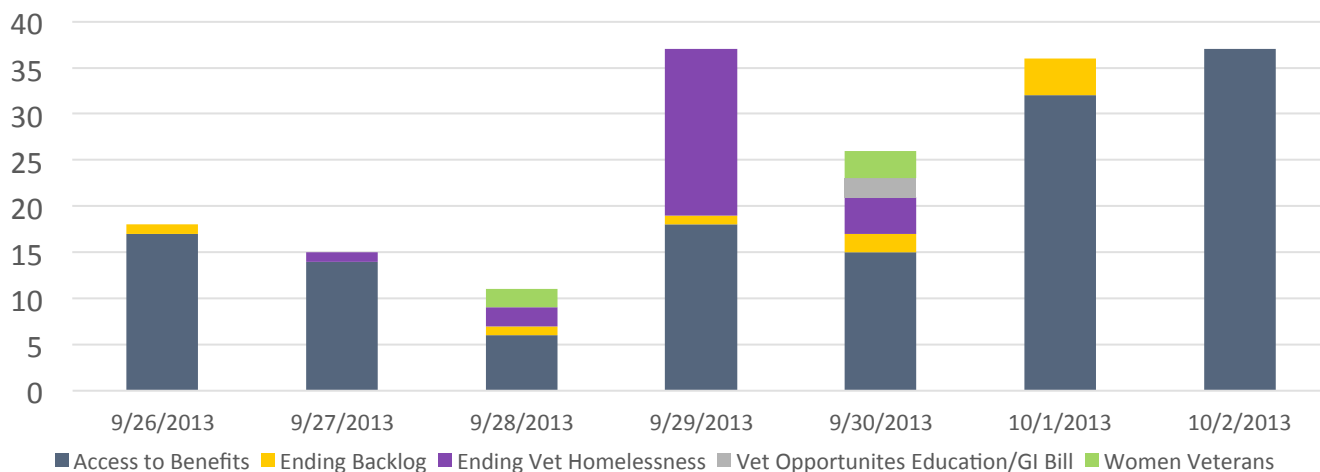
VA Weekly Media Analysis Brief

26 September – 2 October 2013

Executive Summary

- With VA not being blamed for the government shutdown, it was portrayed as a widely-agreed upon essential service. For example, *AP* noted that VA has the highest percentage of employees considered essential at 95%; *NextGov* offered further details which parts within VA had high numbers of essential personnel.
- The timeline of ending disability payments was reported differently by various outlets. Some reported two weeks while others reported at least the end of October. Victoria Dillon provided clarification of suspended payments as the week of 21 Oct, appearing in coverage on 1 Oct.
- Reports on the Backlog expanded in coverage as VA warned the Backlog will grow during a government shutdown. Progress VA has made in eliminating the Backlog was highlighted, while criticisms focused on Congress. Coverage referenced a Twitter post from Asst. Sec. Tommy Sowers.
- Columnist Ruth Marcus appeared in several outlets criticizing the policy of sexual assault claims being denied when incidents are not reported. An appeals court decision prompted media scrutiny of VA policy.
- The interview by Pittsburgh Regional Director Michael Mooreland drew primarily local coverage. The reports quoted Mr. Mooreland, but generally leaned toward a critical tone of his comments. Coverage of prescription medication continued with a critical tone. The *Center for Investigative Reporting* provided in-depth reports on the issue, which was later reprinted in several outlets.
- Artwork valued at \$500,000 purchased by VA exemplified criticisms of government-wide high-cost purchases made by agencies at the end of the fiscal year.

Volume Over Time by Issue*

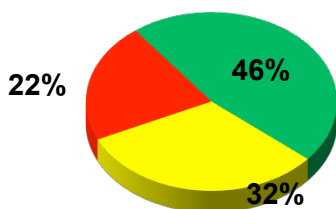


* This chart allows for trend identification, and comparing volume of issues provides context for analysis.

Overall Tone

Tone Key Takeaway

- Most coverage included VA messaging on facts about impacts of the government shutdown on VA. VA has been exempt from blame for changes in provision of services.
- Critical coverage emphasized overuse of prescription medications.
- Sen. Chuck Schumer prompted early critical coverage on VA mental health treatment associated with Aaron Alexis.





VA Weekly Media Analysis Brief

26 September – 2 October 2013

Map of Media Coverage



Interactive map

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

Key Takeaways

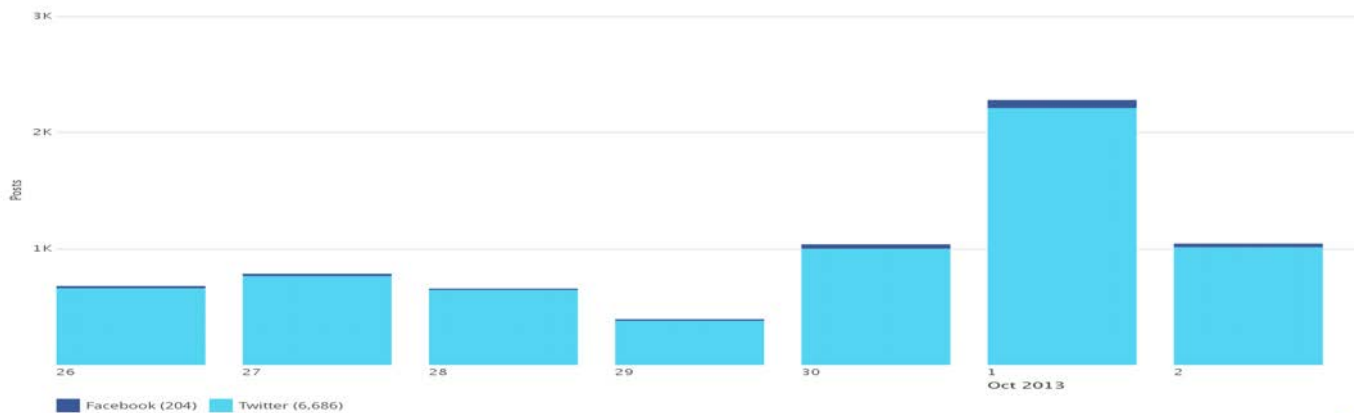
- The observation period began with location-specific coverage on delays of care in Baltimore, MD and Augusta, GA, in which some cases resulted in patient death. The observation period ended with a national focus on VA benefit access due to the government shutdown.
- A high volume of coverage on progress in eliminating Veteran Homelessness in Atlanta appeared outside local coverage.
- Supportive Women Veterans coverage appeared in Ohio outlets due to the Women's Veterans Conference in Columbus.
- A large portion of coverage originated newswire reports, appearing cross the country.



VA Weekly Media Analysis Brief

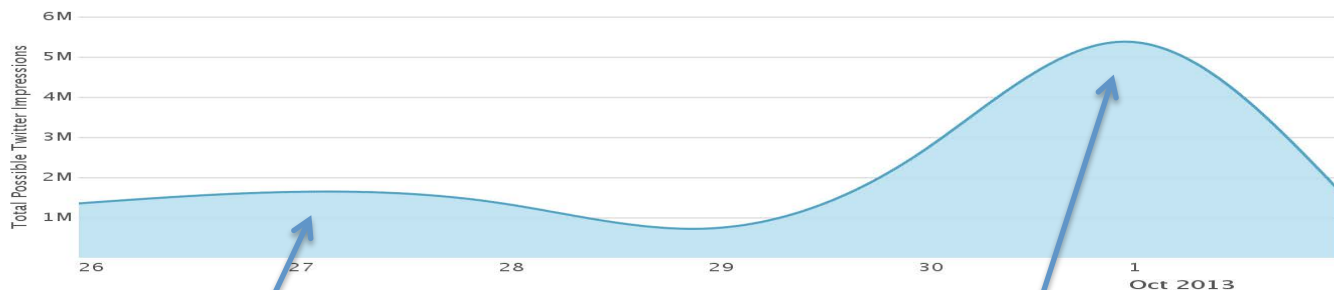
26 September – 2 October 2013

Social Media Volume



Twitter Impressions*

26 September – 2 October = 15 Million



aterkel
@aterkel
Washington, DC

20,281 tweets
5,317 following
29,155 followers

69

How a shutdown will affect Veterans Affairs <http://t.co/Oh2QbWlWQc>

posted on 9/27/13 4:11 PM EDT

Senator Jack Reed
@SenJackReed
Providence, null

1,297 tweets
1 following
6,981 followers

82

This @DeptVetAffairs field guide is a good resource for #veterans concerned about impact of federal #shutdown: <http://t.co/EHeGQy6Jju>

posted on 10/1/13 11:47 AM EDT

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

Key Takeaways

- The impact of a government shutdown drove social media coverage during the observation period with users initially hypothesizing on the effects to Veterans in the event of a shutdown and migrating to the actual impact on benefits and services.
- Given the high-profile political debate surrounding the shutdown, members of Congress accounted for a significant share of social media posts on Veteran benefits.



VA Weekly Media Analysis Brief

19 - 25 September 2013

Issue	Analysis	% of 230 Print Coverage	% of 7 Broadcast Coverage	% of 16 Blog Coverage	Overall Weekly Tone
Access to Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emerging coverage on prescription medications appeared in <i>CBS News</i> and <i>The Huffington Post</i>. An <i>AP</i> report surged coverage of colorectal cancer screenings associated with 6 deaths. Coverage of Dr. Robert Petzel connected his retirement with quality issues in several VA facilities. Access to Benefits dominated coverage with 80% of the total reports. 	77 %	71 %	75 %	
Ending Backlog	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Backlog coverage decreased in volume from the previous reporting period. 	2 %	0 %	0 %	
Ending Veterans Homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volume of coverage increased, primarily in California, discussing new housing projects and a proposed amendment to a state bond. 	4 %	0 %	12 %	
Education/ G.I. Bill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Boston Globe</i> highlighted Student Veterans as a major group of non-traditional undergraduate students, called "Nontrads." 	1 %	0 %	0 %	
Women Veterans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Previous reports highlighted delays between diagnosis to treatment of breast cancer, while this observation period continued a focus on expansion of screenings. 	1 %	0 %	0 %	
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A possible government shutdown prompted a large volume of coverage on possible impacts to Veteran care. 	15 %	29 %	13 %	



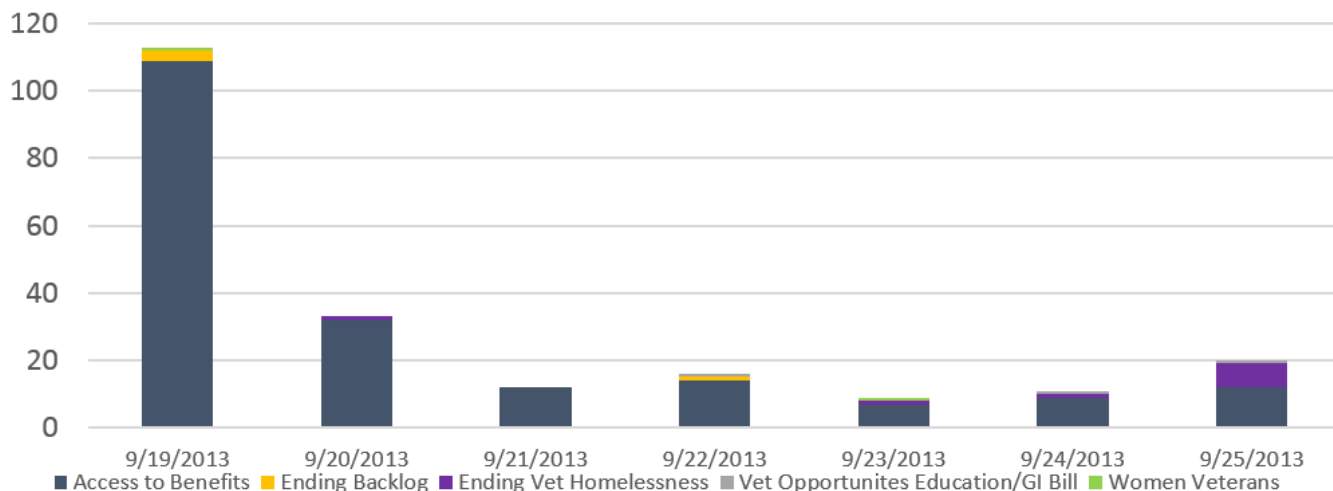
VA Weekly Media Analysis Brief

19 - 25 September 2013

Executive Summary

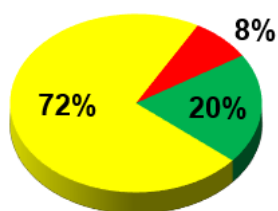
- A preponderance of coverage discussed VA care for Aaron Alexis, sustaining a high volume into the observation period, but dwindled after 19 Sept. Most reports quoted VA comments that Alexis received insomnia care, but not psychological care. A new storyline emerged in *Newsday* quoting Sen. Chuck Schumer saying, "The system clearly broke down," but coverage remained minimal. Additional storylines from the previous observation period declined, including Alexis' disability payments and congressional requests for all documents associated with his treatment. Brief mentions that Alexis sought VA care were deliberately excluded from the observation period data, but coverage quoting VA on the type of care he received was monitored.
- Volume of coverage on prescription medicine increased, relating to overdosing and side-effects. A portion of this coverage connected to the medication prescribed to Alexis.
- Commentary from Sen. Kay Hagan sustained in coverage of the Backlog. Reports shifted from focusing on long delays of transferring records from DoD to highlighting VA as "struggling." The change of blame shifted the tone of coverage to critical.
- Overall volume of coverage increased primarily due to reporting on Alexis. Broadcast coverage volume increased, most notably from *Fox News*, but did not trend with a particular topic.

Volume Over Time by Issue*



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

Overall Tone



Tone Key Takeaway

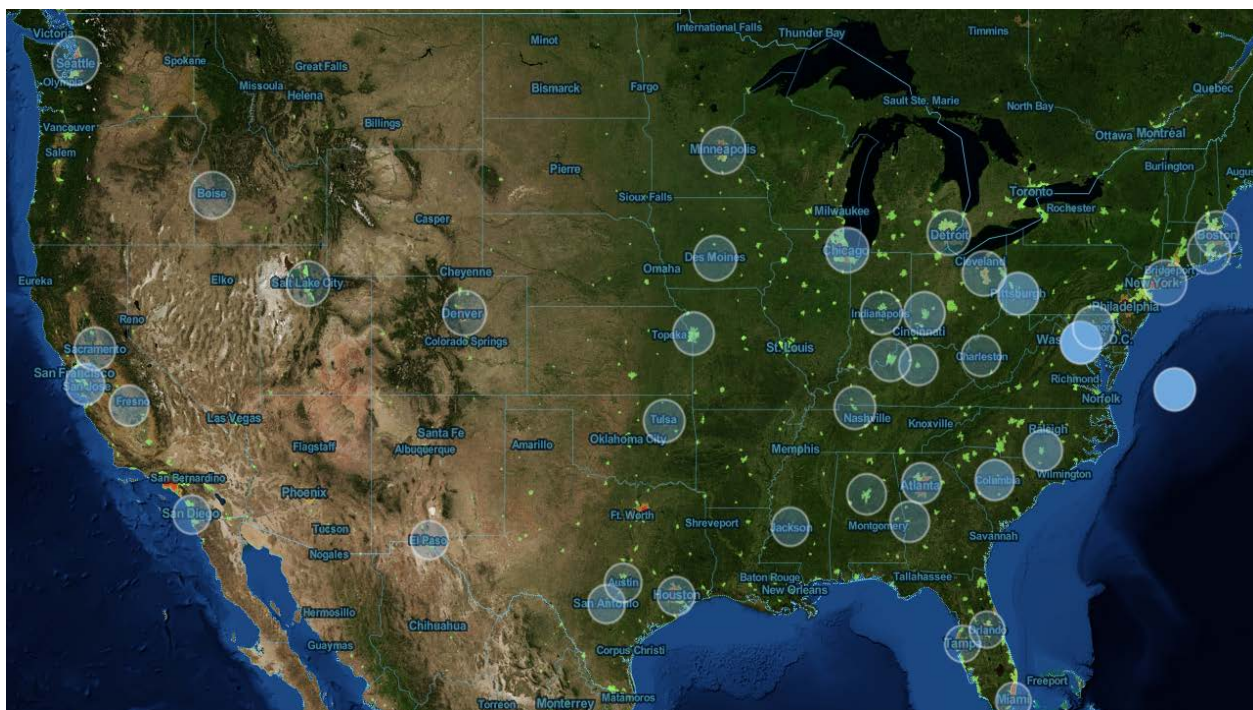
- With VA messaging penetrating a sustained high volume of coverage on Aaron Alexis' treatment, the vast majority of reports remained balanced. Strong presence of VA commentary corrected inaccuracies in initial coverage on the Navy Yard shooting.



VA Weekly Media Analysis Brief

19 – 25 September 2013

Map of Media Coverage



Interactive map

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

Key Takeaways

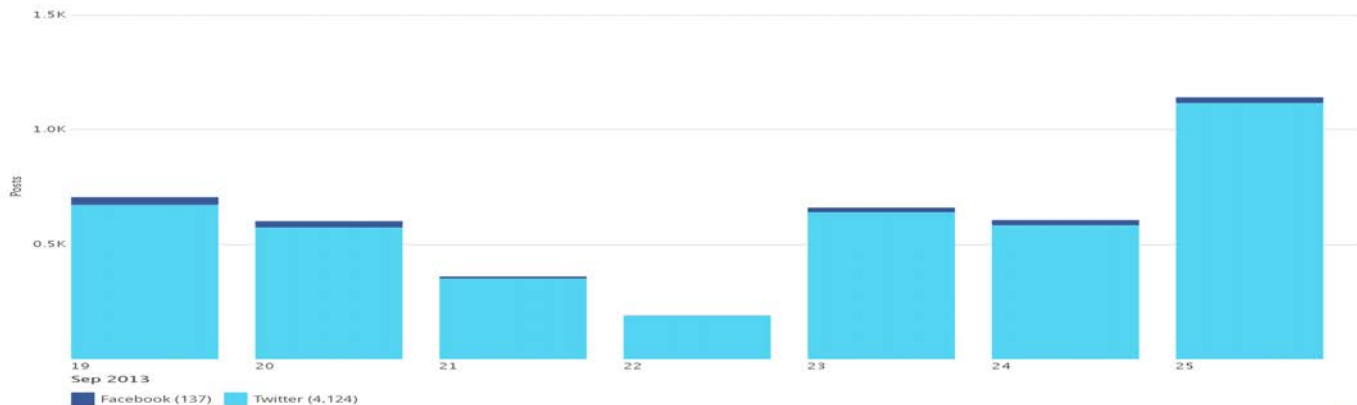
- Balanced newswire reporting on Aaron Alexis comprised a majority of San Antonio coverage and included VA messaging.
- Coverage from San Diego, San Francisco, and San Jose focused primarily on Access to Benefits, and San Jose had a high concentration of Homeless reports as a share of national reporting.
- *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* and *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review* discussed four main topics: VA response to questions on halted construction, VA statistics on mental health care, the retirement of Dr. Petzel, VA Under Secretary for Health, and “no expense is being spared” to combat legionella according to Ali Sonel, Pittsburgh VA chief of staff.



VA Weekly Media Analysis Brief

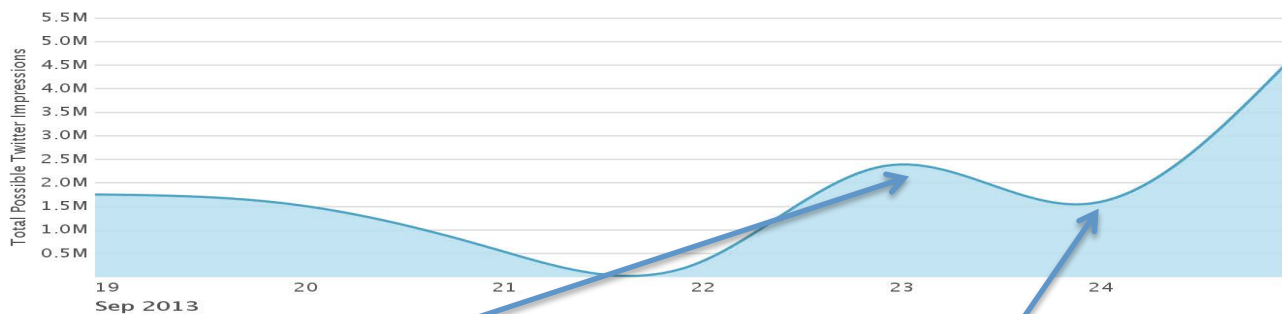
19 - 25 September 2013

Social Media Volume



Twitter Impressions*

19 – 25 September = 13 Million



USDOL
@USDOL
Washington, DC

8,743
tweets

244
following

110,427
followers

89



fox & friends
@foxandfriends
New York, NY

10,971
tweets

844
following

287,208
followers

79

.@StudentVets, @deptvetaffairs + more will join #VetsJobsChat on education options this Wed, 9/25, 3-4pm ET. Details: <http://t.co/YQZejK68SP>
posted on 9/23/13 4:15 PM EDT

RT @PeteHegseth This AM's @foxandfriends clip w/ @ehasselbeck: <http://t.co/rtzHOKnyex> "Vets have seen ObamaCare, it's called @DeptVetAffairs" @ConcernedVets
posted on 9/24/13 11:01 AM EDT

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

Key Takeaways

- Despite the Navy Yard shooting driving the volume of traditional media, social media did not reflect a similar pattern.
- The Department of Labor tweet, which promotes VA education efforts through #VetsJobsChat, appeared throughout the observation period.
- Fox News led critical discussions on VA with Pete Hegseth's appearance on *Fox & Friends* equating Obamacare to inadequate VA care and Greta Van Susteren's opinion on VA bonuses and the Backlog.



VA Weekly Media Analysis Brief

12 - 18 September 2013

Issue	Analysis	% of 128 Print Coverage	% of 6 Broadcast Coverage	% of 7 Blog Coverage	Overall Weekly Tone
Access to Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Care provided to Aaron Alexis drove coverage.Coverage of the Veteran Crisis Line expanded with reports by <i>NPR</i> and <i>The Huffington Post</i> featuring supportive first-hand accounts from responders.Sen. Mark Udall prompted newswire coverage urging VA to better utilize the newly renovated surgery room at Grand Junction Veteran Affairs Medical Center.	59 %	100 %	85 %	●
Ending Backlog	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Congressional commentary continued to drive a preponderance of coverage on the Backlog.	13 %	0 %	0 %	●
Ending Veterans Homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>AP</i> highlighted an event in Tampa for Homeless Veterans with participation by the VA Outreach Bus.	3%	0 %	0 %	●
Education/G.I. Bill	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Low volume of coverage provided a personal account of a Veteran expressing gratitude for the G.I. Bill benefits, which included VA messaging.	1 %	0 %	0 %	●
Women Veterans	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Volume of coverage on Women Veterans increased.<i>Reuters</i> highlighted expansion of mammogram screenings but noted increasing delays from diagnosis to treatment.An American Legion report called VA “male-centric” and made recommendations to improve access for women.	1 %	0 %	0 %	●
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none">A lawsuit in Ohio drove reemerging coverage of mishandled records.	23 %	0 %	15 %	●



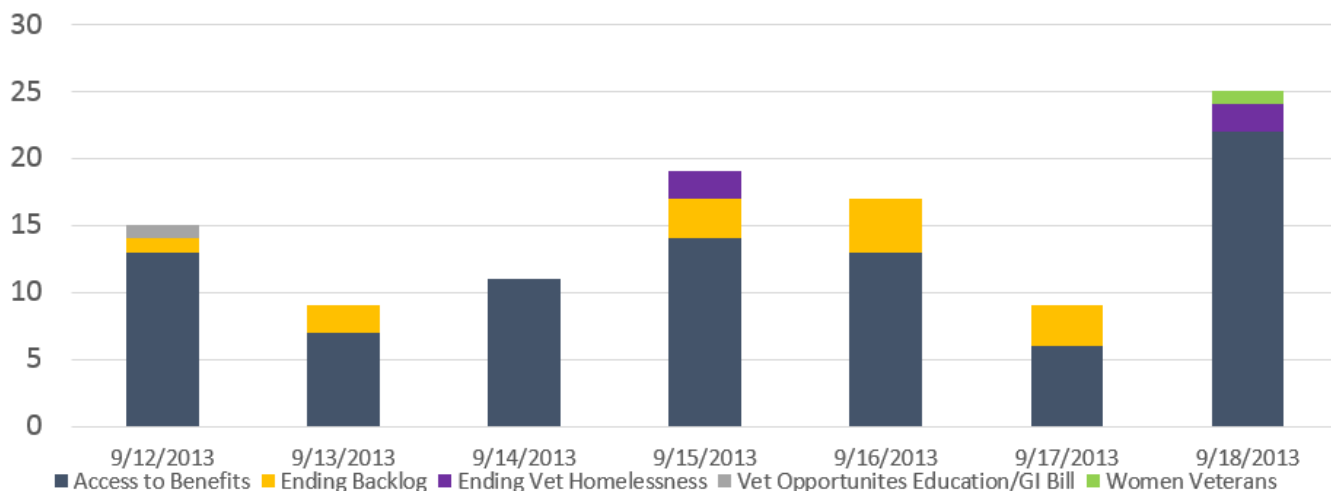
VA Weekly Media Analysis Brief

12 – 18 September 2013

Executive Summary

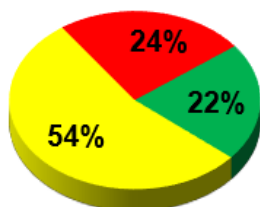
- Aaron Alexis dominated coverage by noting he received care from VA and media questioned why his security clearance was not revoked. This storyline has shifted quickly and has remained balanced in relation to VA. Early reports stated Alexis was a Veteran, followed by reports that he sought psychological care from VA citing an anonymous law enforcement source. The observation period ended with three storylines: 1) Alexis received VA disability payments; 2) VA acknowledged he received treatment for insomnia, but not PTSD; and 3) VA reported he appeared “alert and oriented” without disclosing that he had homicidal thoughts. A separate storyline with a low-volume of overall coverage noted Rep. Jeff Miller’s request for all documents associated with Alexis’ treatment.
- Coverage of the Veteran Crisis Line expanded. *NPR* featured people who answer calls. *The Huffington Post* followed with an article authored by a Suicide Prevention Coordinator. Reports generated a narrative of empathy from caregivers and presented VA as taking clear action to address suicide.
- Sen. Barbara Mikulski and Sen. Kay Hagan drove coverage of the Backlog. Sen. Mikulski described VA as uncooperative and unresponsive, whereas Sen. Hagan criticized DoD delays transferring records to VA.
- *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review* critically reported VA procurement, alleging Dr. Robert Petzel awarded contracts to former VA employees. Coverage on this storyline remained localized and volume remained low.

Volume Over Time by Issue*



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

Overall Tone



Tone Key Takeaway

- Aaron Alexis drove a high volume of balanced coverage.
- Coverage of the Backlog shifted to balanced, but still leaned critical due to comments from Sen. Mikulski. The storyline shifted from processing errors and wait time for appeals to delays at the Baltimore office specifically.



VA Weekly Media Analysis Brief

12 – 18 September 2013

Map of Media Coverage



Interactive map

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

Key Takeaways

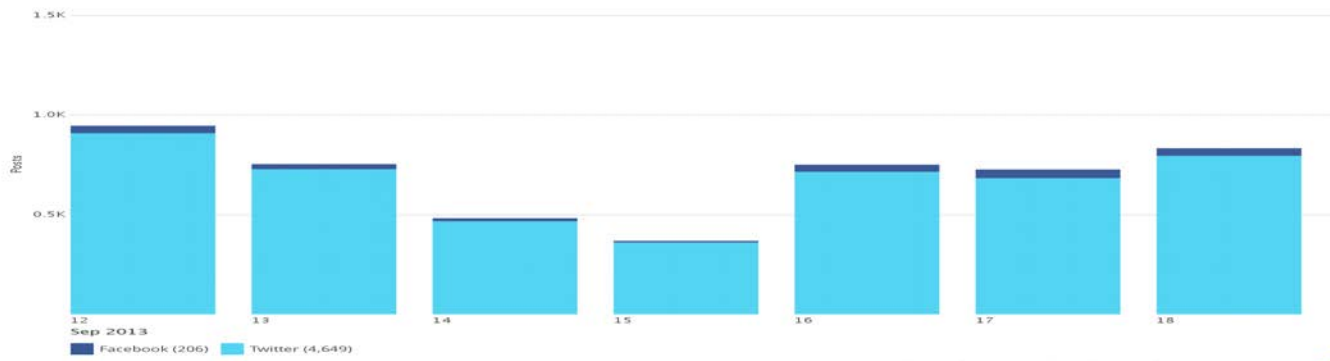
- Coverage in Maryland emphasized the Backlog due to comments from the U.S. Senator from Maryland Barbara Mikulski on the Backlog at the Baltimore, MD office. The storyline remained regional, only appearing in DC metro and Baltimore outlets.
- Coverage of construction appeared in Pittsburgh, PA and Louisville, KY. Rep. Mike Kelly, who represents the local constituency, drove coverage by criticizing halted construction on a \$75 million outpatient center in Butler, PA.



VA Weekly Media Analysis Brief

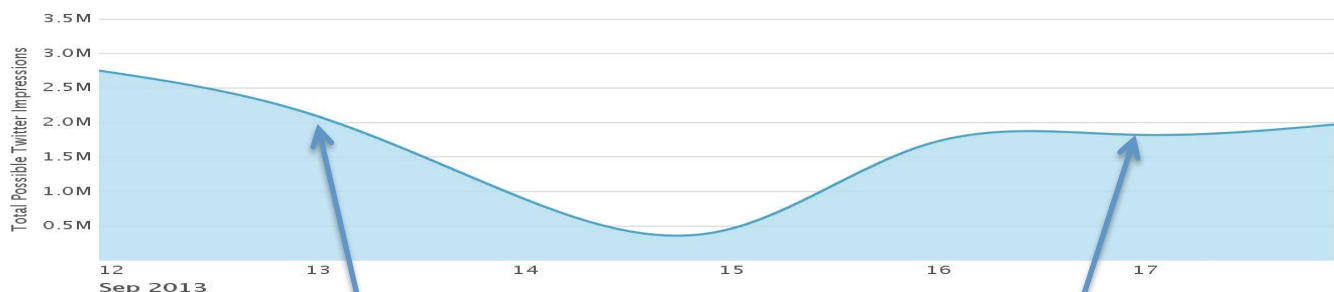
12 - 18 September 2013

Social Media Volume



Twitter Impressions*

12 – 18 September = 12 Million



U.S. Army ✓
@USArmy



Have GI Bill Questions? If so, join
[@VAVetBenefits](#)' Twitter town hall Mon.
9/16 at 3:30 PM ET. Ask ?s using [#askVBA](#)
pic.twitter.com/IFNjOxSOk4

↩ Reply ↻ Retweet ★ Favorite ... More



Barbara Mikulski
[@SenatorBarb](#)
Baltimore, MD

2,311
tweets

8
following

22,221
followers

84

RT @RmzeTns Tough words from @SenatorBarb about VA's Baltimore claims office after @AmericanLegion complaint.
<http://t.co/3GhAWQr1cr>
posted on 9/17/13 1:20 PM EDT

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

Key Takeaways

- US Army promoted the G.I. Bill Twitter Town Hall, garnering many retweets. The Twitter Town Hall on the G.I. Bill was exclusively covered in social media.
- Sen. Mikulski expanded her audience for criticism of the Baltimore VA facility's slow processing of claims. This mirrored the large volume of print coverage of her comments.
- Sen. Hagan tweeted about her meeting with Asst. Sec. Allison Hickey, where she reiterated her message about the need for improvement at VA. Social media did not include her criticism of DoD record sharing.



VA Weekly Media Analysis Brief

5 - 11 September 2013

Issue	Analysis	% of 194 Print Coverage	% of 1 Broadcast Coverage	% of 12 Blog Coverage	Overall Weekly Tone
Access to Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The congressional field hearing in Pittsburgh, PA drove coverage, which surged on 9 Sept. VA messaging mitigated critical reports. Coverage primarily discussed the local Legionella outbreak. A high volume of coverage highlighted VA benefits for same-sex couples early in the observation period but declined on 6 Sept. Caregiver benefits for Pre-9/11 Veterans consistently appeared in a low volume of coverage throughout the week. Reports highlighted VA willingness to provide benefits pending congressional funding. 	72 %	100 %	100 %	
Ending Backlog	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coverage remained critical but shifted from criticism of bonuses to processing errors and wait time for appeals. 	7 %	0 %	0 %	
Ending Veterans Homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A low volume of coverage briefly cited VA statistics on Homeless Veterans. 	0.5 %	0 %	0 %	
Education/G.I. Bill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A variety of topics in coverage included individual university initiatives, state efforts to help students receive G.I. Bill benefits, and a critical article on Veterans' ability to access education funds. 	3.5 %	0 %	0 %	
Women Veterans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AP coverage on a new women's clinic at the Eisenhower VA Medical Center drove coverage. 	5 %	0 %	0 %	
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reemerging issues included conference spending, racism in hiring practices, and headstones. 	12 %	0 %	0 %	



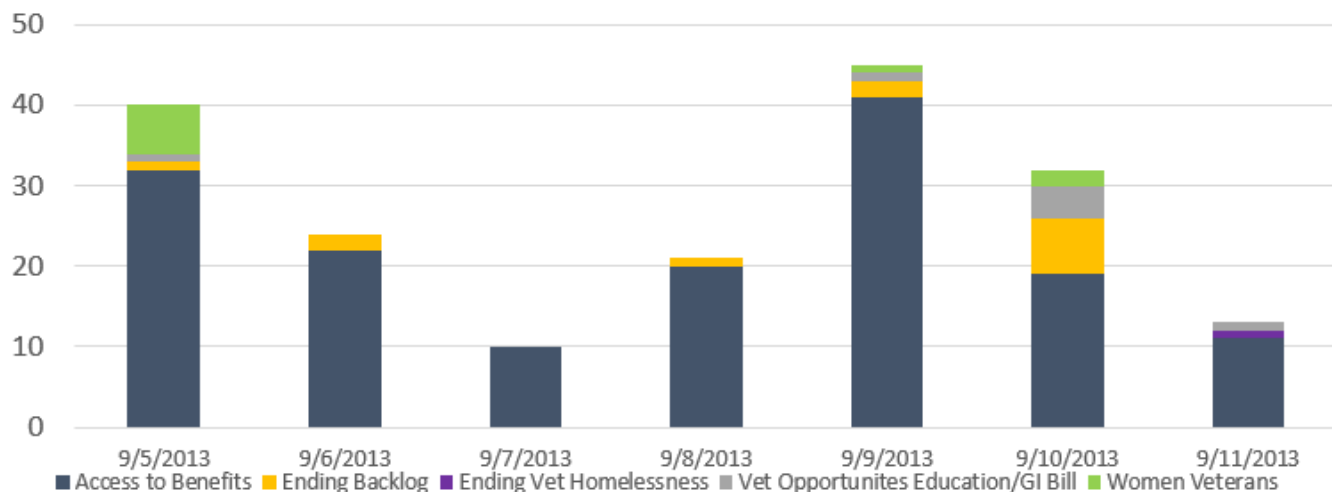
VA Weekly Media Analysis Brief

5 - 11 September 2013

Executive Summary

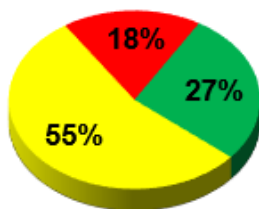
- The congressional field hearing in Pittsburgh, PA connected coverage on Legionella, bonuses, and quality of care issues at the Atlanta, GA and Jacksonville, FL VA facilities. Legionella primarily drove coverage with frequent mention of bonuses to enhance criticism. The preponderance of coverage leaned critical, but over 80% of reports included VA messaging, primarily from Under Secretary Robert A. Petzel, M.D.
- High volume of coverage of the Administration's decision on benefits for same-sex couples continued early in the observation period by highlighting impacts on VA provision of benefits.
- *CNBC* introduced a new storyline of Legionella still being present in Pittsburgh. While the critical report appeared in high visibility broadcast coverage, the saturated coverage of Legionella focused attention elsewhere.
- *The Daily Show* reemerged with critical coverage. The report continued mention of the Backlog but shifted primary criticism to bonuses in connection to the Legionnaire's Disease outbreak in Pittsburgh, Hepatitis exposure in Buffalo, and suicides in Atlanta. The report echoed in online outlets, but did not appear in high visibility broadcast outlets as previously seen with *The Daily Show* reports.
- Reports highlighted a trend of Veterans committing suicide in VA facilities. Coverage remained balanced with strong VA messaging and discussion of suicide prevention efforts. Reports also promoted the Crisis Hotline and noted September's designation as Suicide Awareness Month.

Volume Over Time by Issue*



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

Overall Tone



Tone Key Takeaway

- Coverage of the Pittsburgh congressional hearing drove balanced coverage because it included VA messaging from Dr. Petzel, but often focused on criticism of his statements.
- Backlog coverage remained critical by highlighting a high error rate in claims and long wait for appeals decisions.



VA Weekly Media Analysis Brief

5 - 11 September 2013

Map of Media Coverage



Interactive map

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

Key Takeaways

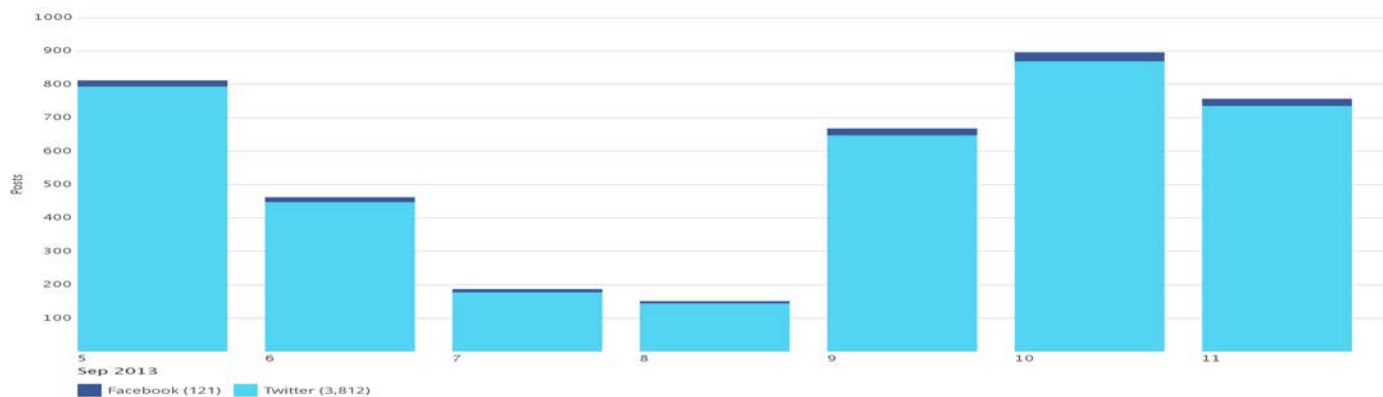
- Pittsburgh outlets had a high portion of coverage discussing the remote congressional hearing, but coverage appeared nation-wide. Legionella coverage previously remained local to Pittsburgh outlets, but Legionella reports expanded to nation-wide coverage.
- The Washington, DC metro region had a high portion of coverage discussing the provision of benefits to same-sex couples.
- Washington state outlets increased in volume of coverage by focusing on a VA internal assessment on quality of care at the Puget Sound facility. While reports included VA messaging calling the assessment a “learning tool,” one letter to the *Northwest Voices* blog of *The Seattle Times* said the author was “sickened” by the results.



VA Weekly Media Analysis Brief

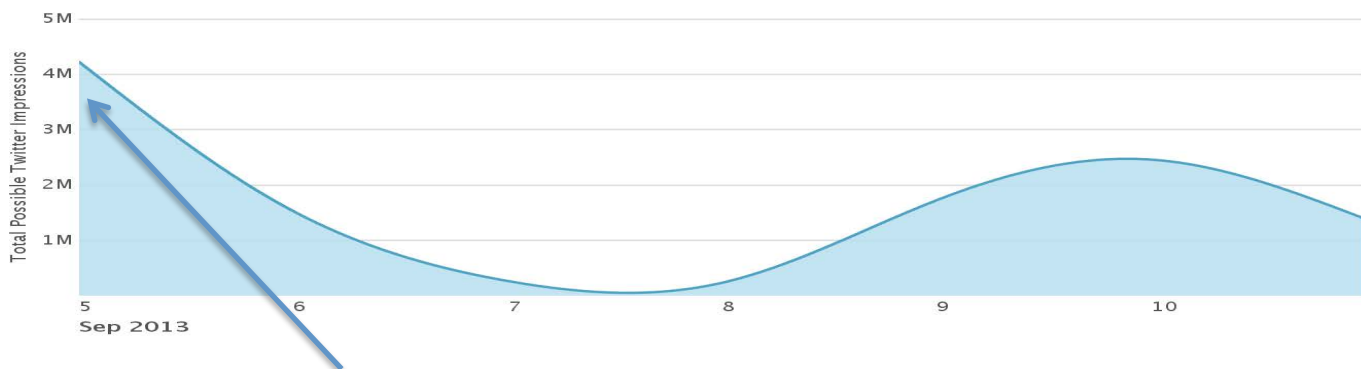
5 - 11 September 2013

Social Media Volume



Twitter Impressions*

5 – 11 September = 12 Million



40,677
tweets

1,580
following

105,865
followers

92



Senator Thad Cochran
@SenThadCochran

432
tweets

392
following

6,436
followers

81

Veterans Affairs to give benefits to gays, as Obama bypasses law and orders <http://t.co/LcoajlR9xL>

posted on 9/5/13 6:50 AM EDT

RT @DeptVetAffairs VA focuses national attention on #SuicidePreventionMonth <http://t.co/qRHUtxf1Ht>

posted on 9/5/13 3:12 PM EDT

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

Key Takeaways

- Benefits for same-sex couples prompted a high portion of social media coverage early in the observation period, mirroring print media.
- @VeteransHealth used #MentalHealthMatters in a commonly retweeted post on mental health.
- Suicide was highlighted by Senator Thad Cochran with a retweet of @DeptVetAffairs on Suicide Prevention Month. @DeptVetAffairs used the hashtag #SuicidePreventionMonth, which was also utilized by other VA twitter accounts and @ReingoldInc.