



THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON

April 9, 2004

A MESSAGE TO ALL VA EMPLOYEES

By now, most of you have either seen or heard about the Primetime presentation last evening. Primetime's depiction of our Department did a disservice to veterans and to VA's dedicated employees across America. I am very disappointed with the media's portrayal, as I do not believe it represents the quality care that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provides to our Nation's veterans. I strongly believe that VA's workforce is largely comprised of highly dedicated individuals who are committed to providing compassionate, outstanding service to veterans.

As a Department, we have much to be proud of, particularly in the health care arena. In the past few years, VA has made historic improvements in quality while providing care to a record number of patients. This year we will care for over 5 million veterans at 1300 sites, and provide 55 million outpatient visits. VA has become a recognized leader in disease prevention, and veterans give VA high marks for quality in health care, nursing care, and timeliness of service.

At the same time, I am dedicated to ensuring that the types of occurrences shown on Primetime do not happen again. However, I cannot accomplish this goal alone. It is vitally important for each VA employee to accept personal responsibility for taking prompt and decisive action to address problems that are brought to our attention. When problems are identified, we must take steps to correct them right away and make sure they do not happen again. I also ask each of you to help me restore the public's trust in the VA system. Your words and actions will do more than anything to reassure veterans and their family members of our commitment to them.

In the VA system we have the unique opportunity and privilege of serving our nation's heroes. I know that you share my pride in providing veterans with the exceptional service they so richly deserve. Let's work together to uphold the sacred calling each of us has -- to care for those who have borne the battle and for their families.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Anthony J. Principi", is centered below the text.

Anthony J. Principi