

# Post-9/11 Veterans React to VA's Reorg Plan

**NEW YORK, NY (November 10, 2014)** – Today, after months of controversy and the day before Veterans Day, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced a reorganization and overhaul plan for the entire department. IAVA released the following statement in response:

“IAVA applauds Secretary McDonald and the VA for being aggressive in presenting a plan to reorganize the entire department,” said IAVA CEO and Founder Paul Rieckhoff. “Major, transformative change that delivers for veterans is long overdue. IAVA members have appreciated frequent opportunities to meet with Secretary McDonald to add our perspective at meetings in Washington, Atlanta and Palo Alto. As the second largest bureaucracy in the federal government and after a summer of scandal, the VA has a mammoth challenge ahead of itself and Secretary McDonald has the toughest job in Washington. He inherited an organization with a badly damaged reputation that only positive results can repair. And he will need tremendous support from Congress, the President, the public, and the veteran community to achieve those results.

“We are pleased Secretary McDonald has adopted a number of recommendations put forward by IAVA and other veteran service organizations over the years. For example, IAVA members have been calling for years for the VA to adopt a customer-first mentality, and we are pleased the Secretary is moving the department in that direction. The VA experience should be less like the broken bureaucracy it is currently, and more like an Apple store.

“We also support the creation of the Chief Customer Service Officer as part of VA’s efforts to be more a customer-service oriented organization. IAVA hopes the implementation of a single regional framework and creation of a single website will simplify the user experience for veterans navigating the VA system. Most of our members are in their twenties and thirties, and expect digital platforms that can deliver. Over the past few years, and in our [2014 IAVA Member Survey](#), many of our veterans have shared the struggles and confusion they face when utilizing the VA’s online portals, from attempting to schedule an appointment to applying for their disability benefits. We applaud Secretary McDonald for focusing on input from veterans on the ground and for establishing the Community Veteran Advisory Councils as a way to strengthen VA’s relationship their customers. We also applaud the creation of the MyVA Idea House where employees can also provide input to improve the system.”

Rieckhoff added: “But making big announcements from Washington is easy. Delivering on them is hard. After years of failure, missed deadlines and disappointment at VA, our veterans will only celebrate when we see results. We’re all rooting for Secretary McDonald and the VA, but IAVA members won’t be satisfied until the mission is accomplished and we see a measurable

difference in local communities nationwide. We look forward to seeing more specifics about the new plan-and a concrete timeline on deliverables. The path back to public trust will be long and hard. But we still believe we can get there and are standing by to help.

“On Veterans Day tomorrow, we look forward to standing united with VA Secretary McDonald, VA employees, our fellow veterans, and all Americans nationwide. Together, we can show the world that even after a summer of bad veterans news in the media, our veterans are rising up and making a positive impact. We invite everyone to join IAVA at events all across America and on social media using the hashtag #VetsRising.”