

Trump Appoints Robert Wilkie as Secretary of Veterans Affairs: Veterans React

NEW YORK, NY (May 18, 2018) – Today, President Trump announced Robert Wilkie, as his nominee for Secretary of Veterans Affairs (VA), to replace the withdrawn nomination of Rear Admiral Ronny Jackson. Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA), the non-partisan, leading voice for the Post-9/11 generation of veterans, reiterates its calls for stability and leadership at VA, careful vetting by members of Congress, and for the nominee to prioritize swift and innovative solutions to the challenges facing veterans nationwide. IAVA and veterans nationwide deserve a swift, seamless transition and quick, effective action by the new VA Secretary.

“After weeks of drama and tumult, we finally have a new nominee. Like any other candidate, Mr. Wilkie will have to prove to millions of veterans nationwide that he is up to this mammoth, sacred leadership task. VA has never before been more vital—or more vulnerable. IAVA members have been clear about what we hope to see from the next leader of the VA. Most of all, we need a committed, focused, leader who will always put veterans above politics. We need a leader who will put veterans voices first, and they can start by focusing on IAVA’s Big Six advocacy priorities, driven by extensive data from our members nationwide. We also look forward to seeing if Wilkie plans to expand privatization at VA, which veterans nationwide continue to overwhelmingly oppose,” **said Paul Rieckhoff, Founder and CEO of IAVA.** “Most of all, we look forward to a rigorous confirmation hearing and public vetting. As the eighth nominee since 9/11, it’s what our veterans deserve and expect.”

IAVA will continue to pressure all elected officials and leaders in Washington, including nominee Wilkie, to work with leadership from both sides of the aisle to ensure VA is best equipped to care for all generations of veterans, including the 2.8 million Post-9/11 veterans. IAVA looks to any nominee for VA Secretary to devote focus on the 2018 [Big 6 Advocacy Priorities](#) outlined in the [IAVA Policy Agenda](#):

1. Sustain the campaign to combat suicide among troops and veterans
2. Sustain the campaign to recognize and improve services for women veterans
3. Defend veteran and military education benefits
4. Defend and reform government support for today’s veterans
5. Initiate support for injuries from burn pits and other toxic exposures
6. Initiate empowerment of veterans who want to utilize cannabis