

Vets React to Choice of Dr. David J. Shulkin as Secretary of Veterans Affairs

NEW YORK, NY (January 11, 2017) – Today, President-elect Trump announced Dr. David J. Shulkin, the Under Secretary for Health for Veterans Affairs, as his nominee for Secretary of Veterans Affairs (VA) to succeed Bob McDonald who has served as Secretary since 2014. Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA), the non-partisan, leading voice for the Post-9/11 generation of veterans, welcomes the prospect of continuity at the VA at this critical time, but IAVA membership has strong concerns about the department being led by a non veteran for the first time in history, especially in a time of war.

“We are optimistic about the nomination of Dr. Shulkin by the President-elect. He is well known to us, a man of character and has been a trusted partner of IAVA at VA. However, his selection is unprecedented. Our membership overwhelmingly supported the selection of a veteran for this critical leadership position,” **said Paul Rieckhoff, Founder and CEO of IAVA.** “Dr. Shulkin’s service as Under Secretary is respected by the entire veterans community. He is a committed leader and is our best hope among candidates reported in the media to maintain the momentum created by Secretary McDonald to reform the VA. We look forward to his confirmation hearing and to providing unique counsel to the President-elect, Congress and the media during the confirmation process and throughout the transition. In particular, we look forward to seeing to what extent the President-elect and Dr. Shulkin plan to expand privatization at VA, which veterans nationwide continue to overwhelmingly oppose.”

“Clarity on who will be counted on to lead the Department of Veterans Affairs is well past due. And now, for the President-elect and his incoming team, the hard work begins. Just as we have for the last 13 years, IAVA will continue to stand firm as America’s most effective, non-partisan watchdog for veterans” **concluded Rieckhoff.**

IAVA will continue to pressure all elected officials, including Dr. Shulkin, 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. In addition, IAVA looks to Dr. Shulkin to devote focus on the top four policy priorities outlined in the [IAVA Policy Agenda](#):

Continue path toward a 21st century VA: The VSO community, and the independent assessment of the Commission on Care as well as other evaluations of the VA. For years, IAVA has demanded a 21st century VA, an organization able to find problems, respond decisively, and provide high quality, timely access to care through an integrated network of care with VA at the core of this network. This is especially urgent for IAVA members who present new healthcare needs, more gender diversity, and significant geographic shifts.

In the last two years, Congress, the Administration and the VSO community have truly come together to work towards this goal.

Lead cultural change to fully recognize the service of women veterans: Ensure that as the fastest growing members of the veteran population, women veterans receive the acknowledgement and care they deserve through the expansion of programs specifically tailored to support their needs.

Prevent Suicide Among Troops and Veterans: Commit to combating suicide and improving mental health care for veterans through continued implementation of the SAV Act and commitment to actions such as recruiting MH professionals to VA, improvement to mental health care access, continued improvements to the Veterans Crisis Line and expansion of peer support programs. Veteran suicide remains a national crisis, with an estimated 20 veterans dying each day from suicide. The passage of the Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans (SAV) Act of 2015, spearheaded by IAVA, was a landmark, bipartisan effort that showed America its politicians can work together, and that veterans issues are everyone's issues, but there is still much work to be done.

Defend the New GI Bill: Commit to defending the promises made to this nation's veterans by not harvesting established benefits, like the post-9/11 GI Bill, as a piggybank to fund other government programs. Further, commit to ensure that those who have dutifully served receive the benefits promised to them, including National Guardsmen and Reservists.

For more information on IAVA's detailed recommendations for the President-elect, his appointees and all elected officials, see our [Policy Agenda](#).

IAVA is the leading voice of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans in Washington and communities nationwide. Led by veterans, our non-partisan advocacy work ensures that Iraq and Afghanistan veterans and their families are supported, protected and never forgotten. Since 2004, IAVA has been a juggernaut in Washington, creating and driving the national conversation on issues ranging from Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) to women veteran issues to veteran unemployment. IAVA's dedicated staff in Washington, D.C. leads this work, advocating on behalf of our members daily. We also train our member veterans to be powerful advocates for their local community.□□

IAVA is focused on results and has delivered historic impacts. Every year since 2007, in an increasingly gridlocked political environment and with an extremely limited operating budget, IAVA has passed at least one major piece of groundbreaking legislation for our community ranging from the Post-9/11 GI Bill (2008), to the VOW to Hire Heroes Act (2011), to The Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans (SAV) Act (2015).

See [IAVA's Advocacy Program Digital Hub](#) for the full list of victories and to learn more about how you can help.