

[IAVA Statement on Call from VA Secretary Nominee Robert Wilkie](#)

Washington, DC (May 18th, 2018) – Today, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA) [Chief Policy Officer Melissa Bryant](#) spoke with the nominee for Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Robert Wilkie by phone, following President Trump’s announcement of his intent to nominate the Acting Secretary of the VA to the permanent Secretary position. As IAVA is the leading non-partisan veterans empowerment organization for the Post-9/11 generation, the two discussed the concerns of IAVA members, [IAVA’s 2018 Big 6 Advocacy Priorities](#), and the need for a short term plan for VA leadership as his nomination process continues.

“We very much appreciated hearing from Mr. Wilkie today,” **said Bryant**. “We appreciate him recognizing the importance of IAVA’s unique voice and the influence of our 425,000 members nationwide. We also appreciate Mr. Wilkie taking the time to hear about the issues that are most critical to IAVA members.”

During the call, Mr. Wilkie highlighted his work on burn pits legislation specifically, after [IAVA’s historic press conference yesterday](#). Bryant expressed to the Acting Secretary that IAVA looks forward to engaging with him on this and other important issues affecting our men and women in uniform as he returns to the Department of Defense, and if he is confirmed as VA Secretary.

IAVA looks forward to a robust confirmation hearing soon, and will continue to advocate that all elected officials and leaders in Washington, including nominee Wilkie, work 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 focus on the non-partisan [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