

[IAVA Welcomes New VA Secretary Bob McDonald](#)

Washington DC (July 29, 2014) – The Senate today confirmed Bob McDonald, former head of Procter and Gamble and West Point graduate, as the new Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA), the largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization representing post-9/11 veterans and their families, welcomes McDonald.

IAVA CEO and Founder Paul Rieckhoff released the following statement:

“IAVA applauds the Senate for quickly confirming Bob McDonald to head the VA. We believe this new change in leadership is the first step in restoring confidence in the VA. McDonald has a great challenge ahead of him – to rebuild faith in a health care system accused of wrongdoing and corruption nationwide. This will not be an easy task, but we stand ready to help him. We urge McDonald to meet with IAVA leadership and implement recommendations from [IAVA’s eight-point “Marshall Plan”](#) for veterans.”

Rieckhoff continued: “This is a critical time for veterans. We are losing 22 veterans a day to suicide, and in our latest [Member Survey](#), we found that 40 percent of respondents knew another post-9/11 veteran who died by suicide. Post-9/11 veteran unemployment continues to be higher than the national average. And the VA claims backlog still stands at over 260,000 as the appeals backlog grows by the week. Combating suicide and improving access to mental health care should be one of McDonald’s first priorities upon taking command of VA. McDonald must be tenacious in addressing these issues and fixing a culture of systemic misconduct at VA offices and hospitals. Our veterans deserve better care and McDonald must rise to the occasion.”