

For Immediate Release



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WASHINGTON D.C. — AMVETS (American Veterans) National Commander Jan Brown released the following statement in reaction of President-Elect Joe Biden's nomination for Secretary of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs:

Today, President-elect Joe Biden selected Denis McDonough to serve as the next Secretary of Veterans Affairs. While we are concerned that this nominee is not a veteran and may not fully understand the Department of Veterans Affairs and its complexities, we are in need of new ideas and leadership. We believe Denis McDonough is a leader with the knowledge and vision to deliver results. We hope he is up to the task to deliver results for our country's greatest heroes and we support him in this endeavor.

For nearly two decades, the VA has been plagued with a suicide and mental health epidemic. Congress has increased funding from \$2.5 billion a year to nearly \$10 billion a year, yet the problem has not been alleviated.

This is the number one issue we are looking to Mr. McDonough to address.

No longer is it sufficient for the Department of Veterans Affairs to congratulate themselves on 1-2% gains when 6,000-plus veterans lose their lives every year. We need a paradigm shift with regards to mental health and suicide.

AMVETS has rung the alarm in numerous Congressional hearings, press statements, and testimonies on the serious policy flaws that our country has followed and continues to support.

We can continue with the status quo, or we can create meaningful change. Reforming an ineffective and unproven mental health system at the Department of Veterans Affairs needs to

be this administration's number one priority. There is not a close second place when we are losing 6,000 veteran lives every year.

Additionally, women and minority veterans need to enter a welcoming VA when they walk through the doors. The VA needs a new and fresh focus to ensure that becomes a reality. We believe placing a female in a top administration position at the VA is a good start to ensuring these issues are addressed. Many veterans service organizations, including AMVETS, have elected women veterans to their top leadership roles. Our community is stronger with this diversity that also reflects our incredible community. VA is behind the ball and we need to fix it.

We are looking forward to working with Mr. McDonough to make positive strides forward on these issues and congratulate him on his selection.

Be bold and make big changes, Mr. McDonough.

***AMVETS**, which is also known as American Veterans, is the most inclusive Congressionally-chartered veterans service organization open to representing the interests of more than 19 million veterans and their families. We are veterans serving veterans since 1944.
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