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American Legion: Shulkin 'remains best to lead VA

(WASHINGTON, February 19, 2018) -- The leader of nation's largest veterans organization issued the following statement regarding Secretary of Veterans Affairs David Shulkin:

"On behalf of the two million members of The American Legion, we express our support for the job the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs Dr. David Shulkin has done while in office," said American Legion National Commander Denise H. Rohan. "While we were disappointed to learn of the recent issue with the secretary's travel, we believe that the current controversy surrounding Shulkin is part of a larger effort to remove him and install others who would take steps to privatize the services provided to our nation's heroes by the VA.

"Shulkin was the only current cabinet member that was unanimously confirmed by the U.S. Senate. He is a board-certified doctor and has extensive experience improving the efficiency and effectiveness of large health care systems. Under his tenure, VA has implemented appeals modernization, improved the Post 9-11 GI Bill, implemented electronic health records, improved patient satisfaction, implemented sharing agreements with 76 Department of Defense medical facilities, significantly decreased wait times, increased accountability throughout the enterprise, increased veteran access to mental health care, fixed the crisis center call line, improved the rate at which out-of-system providers get reimbursed, and much more.

"Recent media investigations have confirmed that several political operatives have taken active measures to undermine Shulkin, his deputy, his former chief of staff and their ability to lead. In the years following World War I, The American Legion fought to create the VA and we remain committed to its success. We believe the VA is a system worth saving as it represents one of the last threads of real connectivity between the American people and those that defend our Constitution and fight our wars. When our nation sends our youth off to distant battlefields and they return ill or injured, we have a moral responsibility to make them as whole as possible and to do our best to transition them to civilian life.

"The VA remains the symbol of our national commitment to our veterans. We are 100 percent opposed to the privatization of the VA and will work vigorously to ensure our nation's veterans have the efficient, transparent and properly functioning VA that they deserve. We have been encouraged by the great progress Shulkin has made and believe that he remains the best person to lead this important federal public institution on the behalf of the American people."