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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

American Legion Congratulates New VA Secretary-Designate

WASHINGTON (Dec 8, 2008) - The head of the nation's largest veterans service organization expressed his congratulations and desire to work with President-Elect Obama's choice to lead the Department of Veterans Affairs in the upcoming administration.

"Gen. Eric Shinseki has made a career of serving this country," said American Legion National Commander David K. Rehbein. "A former Army chief of staff and a Vietnam veteran, Gen. Shinseki knows what it's like to lead. We are all familiar with the current slogan 'Army Strong.' We are committed to working with Gen. Shinseki to provide a health care system that is 'VA Strong.'"

Rehbein added that Shinseki will face great challenges. "Eliminating the backlog that veterans face to use the health care system that was created for them must be a top priority," he said. "VA must also ensure that veterans understand and can easily access the benefits for which they are entitled under the new GI Bill. Funding must remain a priority, even during tough economic times. Congress must remember that if not for America's veterans, there would not be a U.S. economy to worry about. We hope that Gen. Shinseki's Pentagon experience will enhance the integration underway for DoD and VA to share its information technologies and provide for a seamless transition. The American Legion stands ready to assist Gen. Shinseki in providing the care and benefits that America's veterans deserve."

With a membership of 2.6-million wartime veterans, The American Legion was founded in 1919 on the four pillars of a strong national security, veterans affairs, Americanism, and patriotic youth programs. Legionnaires work for the betterment of their communities through more than 14,000 posts across the nation.

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