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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Legion to VA: Hickey Must Go *'If crimes occurred, culprits must be prosecuted'*

WASHINGTON (September 29, 2015) -- American Legion National Commander Dale Barnett repeated his organization's call for VA Undersecretary for Benefits Allison Hickey to resign amid new allegations of more wrongdoing by senior VA executives.

"In 2014, then-National Commander Dan Dellinger called on the VA Secretary, the Under Secretary for Health and Under Secretary for Benefits to all step down due to widespread scandals that infected the entire department," Barnett said "While the VA Secretary and Under Secretary for Health Care did step down, Under Secretary Hickey ignored the wishes of veterans and stayed on. Now, we have VA's own Inspector General's office determining that two senior executives under Hickey inappropriately used their positions to benefit from an overly-generous relocation policy. It's disturbing to read terms like 'criminal referrals' and 'coerced' in an official report about an agency that was created to serve veterans. It is time for Under Secretary Hickey to finally do the right thing and resign."

Investigators have determined that the directors of the VA Regional Offices in Philadelphia and St. Paul, Minn., used their prior positions to coerce the previous directors to accept reassignment and create openings that they themselves would fill, while retaining their higher salaries for their new lower-level positions.

Moreover, Philadelphia VARO Director Diana Rubens and St. Paul VARO Director Kimberly Graves collected more than \$274,000 and \$129,000 respectively in relocation costs. According to the IG, when Rubens informed Hickey that she wanted "to take advantage of the Philly Director opening," Hickey responded that she would "be all in to help and make it happen."

"Representative Jeff Miller has said that if warranted, officials should be prosecuted 'to the fullest extent of the law.' I agree," Barnett said. "Culprits must be prosecuted and all VA officials must be held accountable for any wrongdoing that occurred."

With a current membership of 2.2 million wartime veterans, The American Legion was founded in 1919 on the four pillars of a strong national security, veterans affairs, Americanism, and youth programs. Legionnaires work for the betterment of their communities through nearly 14,000 posts across the nation.

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