From: Raughter, John B.
To: All Legion Leadership
Subject: Corrected version / Please disregard previous / Legion National Commander: "Together, we can get VA back on track"
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Commander: 'Together, we can get VA back on track'

American Legion national commander expresses confidence that McDonald will work closely with veterans to restore trust in VA.

WASHINGTON (July 29, 2014) -- American Legion National Commander Daniel M. Dellinger today thanked the Senate for acting quickly to confirm the nomination of former Procter & Gamble Chief Executive Officer Robert McDonald to become secretary of the embattled Department of Veterans Affairs. "The time to act is now," Dellinger said. "Veterans are waiting for the care they earned and deserve."

The Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs voted 14-0 Wednesday in support of McDonald, 61, who would replace retired Army Gen. Eric Shinseki, who resigned in late May. Shinseki's departure came after The American Legion called for urgent change, starting with new leadership at the top, to restore trust in the system after revelations that veterans had died waiting for VA doctor appointments that were never really scheduled and that executives received bonuses for falsified performance reports.

From McDonald, Dellinger said he looks for the kind of changes one would expect in the corporate world when a company is in trouble.

"The American Legion is confident that Robert McDonald will apply his experience leading big, complex business operations to the Department of Veterans Affairs, a complex operation that desperately needs a system-wide overhaul right now," Dellinger said. "I am also confident Mr. McDonald will understand the importance of engaging the veteran stakeholders of the VA health-care system as reforms are adopted in the coming months."

Dellinger said the incoming VA secretary must make patients his first priority and include them at the table as changes are planned and executed. "It's time to put the veteran back into the Department of Veterans Affairs," Dellinger said. "No more secret lists. No more bonuses for poor performance or unreasonably long waiting times for appointments. No more accuracy breakdowns in deciding benefits claims. In this equation, the veteran is the customer, and The American Legion represents that customer. We look forward to working with Mr. McDonald. Together, we can get VA back on track and restore trust among the patients it serves, as well as the public, which expects nothing less than timely, high-quality care for our nation's veterans."

With more than 2.4 million members, The American Legion is the nation's largest veterans service organization.

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