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Contact: Cassie Gabelt, Communications Manager  
cgabelt@minorityvets.org

**MVA Reacts to Confirmation of Denis McDonough as Secretary of Veterans Affairs: Minority Veterans Must be Focus of New Administration**

WASHINGTON, DC [February 9, 2021] – Yesterday, by a vote of 87-7, Denis McDonough was confirmed as the next Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Minority Veterans of America (MVA) looks forward to working closely with Secretary McDonough to address the unique needs of the veteran population. McDonough will be only the second non-veteran to lead the agency that serves the 18 million American veterans, including the over 2,100 MVA members globally, and will call on Secretary McDonough and the Biden administration to go past the status quo and ramp up efforts to effectively support the needs of our nation’s minority veterans.

“We are thrilled to see Secretary McDonough come through the confirmation process quickly and with bipartisan support,” said **Lindsay Church, MVA Executive Director**. “We look forward to working with the Secretary and his team to prioritize assistance amid the continuing COVID-19 pandemic, growing prevalence of systemic racism and extremism, and an substantial lack of inclusive and equitable services for our nation’s most underprivileged and underserved veteran populations.”

“Leading the nation's second largest executive agency after a four-year vacuum of competent leadership will certainly be no easy task. We look forward to supporting Secretary McDonough as the Department looks to restore the trust of minority veterans in the Department, and will continue to work to ensure that all veterans receive the care, recognition, and support that they earned.”

“MVA members and staff will be watching closely to see the steps Mr. McDonough takes in his first months as Secretary and will not shy from demanding he find answers to the hard problems, respond decisively, and work towards a more inclusive VA for all. Secretary McDonough can immediately take concrete action that will signal his commitment to rebuilding trust between the agency and veterans. Steps like updating the outdated VA motto to be gender inclusive, ending the ban on gender confirmation surgery for trans veterans at VA, and issuing an apology for gaslighting and victim blaming sexual assault survivor, Andrea Goldstein. We will also be the first to celebrate wins and steps forward towards our collective goals, and look forward to being a partner with Secretary McDonough and VA to help in any way possible,” **Church continued**.

We encourage Secretary McDonough to pledge to focusing VA time and resources on MVA’s top five policy priorities:

- Addressing Economic Disparities for Minority Veterans
- Resolving Systemic Injustices for Minority Veterans
- Pandemic Recovery
- Addressing Healthcare Access Disparities and Creating a More Equitable Department of Veterans Affairs



- Addressing Veteran Suicide and Mental Health Disparities

Minority Veterans of America works to create belonging and advance equity and justice for the minority veteran community. The organization represents millions of veterans—including women, veterans of color, members of the LGBTQ community, and religious and non-religious minorities—and directly serves thousands of veteran-members across 48 states, 2 territories, and 2 countries. For more information, visit [www.minorityvets.org](http://www.minorityvets.org)

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*Minority Veterans of America (MVA) is a non-partisan, non-profit organization that was designed to create belonging and advance equity and justice for underrepresented veterans, including BIPOC, women, LGBTQ, and religious minority veterans. The organization aims to transform the narrative of the American veteran by building an interconnected community, fostering greater understanding of our memberships' identities, and serving minority veterans through the development of targeted programming and advocacy. For more information, visit [www.minorityvets.org](http://www.minorityvets.org).*