

# The American Legion



OFFICE OF THE  
NATIONAL COMMANDER

★ WASHINGTON OFFICE ★ 1608 "K" STREET, N.W. ★ WASHINGTON, D.C. 20006 ★  
(202) 263-2986 ★

March 30, 2015

The Honorable Robert McDonald (00)  
Secretary, Department of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Mr. Secretary:


The American Legion would like to commend you for establishing a task force to rebuild the trust that was lost between veterans and the government agency that was created to serve them, the Department of Veterans Affairs. However, Mr. Secretary, we feel that the lack of representation by those with the most expertise, the major Veterans Service Organizations, dooms any chance that the MyVA Advisory Committee (MVAC) has for success.

While The American Legion welcomes the input and experience of leaders in the academic and business communities, it is the veterans that are the biggest stakeholders in VA. We do not take issue with any of the individuals who have been appointed to the Committee but it is a **slap in the face** to have only one seat at the table – and a rotating seat at that – which will be occupied by a major VSO. As accomplished and impressive as the current committee members are, nobody can match the collective wisdom and expertise of The American Legion and other VSOs when it comes to issues relating to veterans. Through our town halls and the work of our service officers, we have one-on-one relationships with veterans that nobody can match.

The American Legion alone represents more than 2.3 million veterans. The other leading VSOs also represent millions of veterans. Each VSO has its own constituency and unique areas of expertise and interest. The MVAC would be greatly enriched by a much more robust representation of VSOs. **Moreover, we strongly believe that The American Legion, the organization that advocated for the creation of the Department of Veterans Affairs, must have permanent representation on the MVAC.**

The American Legion was congressionally chartered nearly a century ago to be the voice of our nation's wartime veterans. We are the largest VSO. It is very disturbing, to say the least, that the initial appointments to the MVAC do not include a single American Legion representative.

We are confident that this oversight will soon be corrected by you.

For God and Country  
  
MICHAEL D. HELM  
National Commander