

## *Letter of Transmittal*



To the President of the United States, President of the Senate, President pro tempore of the Senate, and Speaker of the House of Representatives:

I am pleased to submit the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) Annual Performance Report FY 2000, as required by the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993. This report documents VA's progress in providing high-quality, timely benefits and services to America's veterans.

During FY 2000, the Department's efforts resulted in many notable accomplishments. VA provided health care to more patients than at any time during our history of service to veterans and their families. The quality of our health care delivery increased, while the cost of providing that care continued to decline. For the second year in a row, patients' satisfaction with VA outpatient care ranked above outpatient care offered by private sector hospitals. The average annual income of disabled veterans who completed the vocational rehabilitation and employment program was nearly six times greater than before they entered the program.

The Department took aggressive steps to improve access to benefits and services by expanding the number of facilities providing health care, reducing waiting times for health care, and opening three new national cemeteries. Veterans can now contact us more easily because of improvements in telephone service and the application of new technologies.

Our Nation is deeply indebted to the more than 25.5 million living men and women who have served our country in uniform. I am honored and privileged to have the opportunity to work with Congress, veterans service organizations, and over 200,000 dedicated VA employees to ensure that America fulfills the promise to our veterans and their families. As I begin my tenure as Secretary, I look forward to working together to improve the timeliness and accuracy of claims processing, to expand access to quality health care, and to meet the burial needs of veterans. Our veterans deserve the best our country can offer, and I intend to make sure they receive the care and service they have earned.

Anthony J. Principi  
Secretary of Veterans Affairs