



Dr. Stephen L. Ondra, M.D.

Department of Veterans Affairs

Washington, D.C.

Dr. Stephen Ondra, M.D., was appointed as Senior Policy Advisor for Health Affairs in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) by President Obama on May 10, 2009. Prior to that, he served on the Veterans Affairs group in the Obama-Biden Presidential Transition Team, as well as on the Obama-Biden Campaign Health Policy and Veteran's Policy committees.

Dr. Ondra first entered government service as a Cadet at the U.S. Military Academy. After receiving injuries in a training accident, Dr. Ondra completed pre-medical studies at Illinois Wesleyan University. By his graduation in 1984, Dr. Ondra had recovered sufficiently from his injuries to allow him to re-enter Army service while earning his doctorate at Rush Medical College in Chicago, Ill. He completed his residency training at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C., where he received specialized instruction in spine surgery and reconstruction in both the neurosurgery and orthopedic specialties.



**Senior Policy Advisor
for Health Affairs**

Dr. Ondra was deployed to Saudi Arabia from 1990 to 1991 in support of Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. His service was recognized with a Bronze Star and Army Commendation Medal. Following his deployment, he was assigned to Walter Reed and became the Director of Spine and Skull-base Surgery.

After leaving military service in 1994, Dr. Ondra joined the Clinical Faculty at the University of Michigan. In 1996, he moved to Illinois' Northwestern University, where he served as the Residency Program Director Vice Chair, Director of Spine Surgery, Director of the Spinal Deformity Fellowship, Director of Spine Research, and Medical Director of the Neuro-Spine Intensive Care Units. He also chaired the Medical Device and Technology Committee at Northwestern Memorial Hospital. In 2006, he was promoted to Professor of Neurological Surgery at Northwestern.

In parallel to his medical work in both the military and civilian worlds, Dr. Ondra has worked with several Government agencies. He chaired the Scientific Advisory Board for the Defense Spinal Cord and Column Injury Project for the Department of Defense, and served on the Medical Coverage Advisory Committee with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services at the Department of Health and Human Services. His medical expertise has allowed him to advise and discuss health policy matters with members of Congress, Cabinet Members and foreign government leaders.

Dr. Ondra and his wife Cindy have three daughters.