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News Release

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VA Expands Transparency, Accountability Efforts

Becomes First Agency to Post Information on Adverse Employee Actions, Requires Senior Official Sign-off on All Settlement Actions Above \$5,000

WASHINGTON — Today, U.S. Secretary of Veterans Affairs David J. Shulkin announced that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is taking a further step on transparency and accountability as a follow-on to the VA Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act signed by the president less than two weeks ago.

Beginning today, the department is making public a list of adverse employee actions taken since Jan. 20. This information is posted at <http://www.va.gov/accountability>, and will be updated weekly.

Secretary Shulkin pointed to the move as another step in long-sought transparency and accountability actions at VA, and noted that VA is the first federal agency to make such data public. "Under this administration, VA is committed to becoming the most transparent organization in government," Shulkin said. "Together with the Accountability bill the president signed into law recently, this additional step will continue to shine a light on the actions we're taking to reform the culture at VA.

"Veterans and taxpayers have a right to know what we're doing to hold our employees accountable and make our personnel actions transparent," he continued. "Posting this information online for all to see, and updating it weekly, will do just that."

For privacy reasons, the adverse action list will not include employee names, but will give information on the position, VA region or administration and type of adverse or disciplinary action taken.

The list includes terminations, demotions and suspensions over 14 days since the new administration came into office Jan. 20. Additional categories of accountability actions will be included in upcoming releases.

In addition to posting the adverse action information, Secretary Shulkin announced that he is requiring approval by a senior official of any monetary settlement with an employee over the amount of \$5,000. Any settlement above this amount will require the personal approval of the Under Secretary, Assistant Secretary or equivalent senior-level official within the organization in which the dispute occurs.

"Taxpayers need to know that we will engage in good faith settlement negotiations, where required by third parties, but will look to settle with employees only when they clearly have been wronged or when settlement is otherwise in Veterans' and taxpayers' best interests, and not as a matter of ordinary business," Secretary Shulkin said. "We're changing to a culture of accountability at VA, and this is an important step in that direction."

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