



THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON

March 23, 2022

The Honorable Lloyd J. Austin III
Secretary of Defense
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Mr. Secretary:

At the request of the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services' (DACOWITS) leadership, I am reaching out to request that you designate a representative to serve as the Department of Defense (DoD) ex-officio member on the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Advisory Committee on Women Veterans (ACWV).

The Committee was established in 1984 by 38 U.S.C. § 542 to advise on issues related to the administration of VA benefits for women Veterans. Subsection (a) (2) (B)(ii) mandates that the Committee include "the Secretary of Defense (or a representative of the Secretary of Defense designated by the Secretary of Defense after consultation with DACOWITS)" serving in the capacity of ex-officio member. The current leadership thought it prudent to revisit this designation, since the language does not specifically name DACOWITS as the ex-officio member, and to give you an opportunity to determine who you would want to serve in this role.

Historically, the military director of DACOWITS has served as the Committee's DoD ex-officio. This has been the standard practice for many years, but it is unclear how the designation was originally established. This is the reason that leadership at DACOWITS advised VA's Center for Women Veterans (CWV), the staff office managing the Committee, that it is necessary for DoD leadership to officially establish this designation, in order for the military leader to continue to serve in this capacity. On a reciprocal note, CWV's director serves as an ex-officio member on DACOWITS. This helps both VA and DoD better serve Service women's anticipated needs and refine policies so they will be more equitable for women.

Over the years, DACOWITS representation has greatly informed the Advisory Committee on Women Veterans (ACWV) understanding of issues impacting women in the Services and has helped them create informed recommendations to VA in anticipation of women Veterans' evolving needs. I welcome a continuation of this mutually beneficial partnership. However, I trust that you will designate the person you believe will best advise the ACWV on DoD's policies and efforts to address issues experienced by women in the Services. Information regarding the law and ACWV's charter are enclosed for your consideration. Lourdes Tiglaio, CWV Director and Designated Federal officer for the ACWV, can answer any questions about this request or the ACWV's activities. I request your designee contact Ms. Tiglaio by April 5, 2022. She can be reached at Lourdes.Tiglaio@va.gov.

Sincerely,

Denis McDonough

Enclosures



OSD002581-22/CMD003192-22