



(January 14, 2016)

In order to further improve the lines of communication and to respond to the concerns between the National VA Council and you our members, I have established a National VA Council Briefing. This NVAC Briefing will bring you the latest news and developments within DVA and provide you with the current status of issues this Council is currently addressing. I believe that this NVAC Briefing will greatly enhance the way in which we communicate and the way in which we share new information, keeping you better informed.

Alma L. Lee
National VA Council, President

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**In This Briefing: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day 2016**  
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On Monday, January 18, 2016, the Department of Veterans Affairs pauses to join the Nation in remembering and celebrating the great American leader, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and his immeasurable contributions to the character of our country.

In his eloquent words and in the peaceful, compassionate life he lived, Dr. King gave our Nation an inspired and inspiring vision. He had a clear purpose for his life, and it guided how he lived and treated others. We would all do well to think about and learn from his powerful example of a life driven by purpose.

On April 4, 1967, in New York City, Dr. King gave what would be his final sermon. In this remarkable homily, he described his purpose: “We all want to be important, to surpass others, to achieve distinction, to lead the parade,” Dr. King said. But what was most important to him, he explained, was quite simple. That was to be remembered as one who “tried to give his life serving others. . . . to love and serve humanity.”

Though many years have passed, Dr. King’s lesson is relevant to the way we conduct our own lives. It encourages kindness and patience in how we treat one another. It shapes how we might consider the unique and often unspoken personal experiences and challenges of our friends, families, colleagues, fellow citizens, and the Veterans and families we serve—and to whom we are devoted. And it reinforces the

virtue of our own I-CARE Values of Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect, and Excellence.

“Each time a person stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he or she sends forth a tiny ripple of hope,” Senator Robert F. Kennedy reminded in 1966. “These ripples crossing each other form a million different centers of energy and daring, build a current that can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.”

So this year, as we remember Dr. King, let us consider dedicating or re-dedicating ourselves to our own purpose or to discovering our individual purpose if it is not clear. Join me in a commitment to make a positive difference in the life of people every day.

Thank you for your service to our Nation’s Veterans, and God bless you all as we celebrate Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.

Robert A. McDonald

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