



*(December 24, 2015)*

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:** [Office of Diversity and Inclusion](#)  
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Office of Diversity and Inclusion
VA
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

*NewsLink*

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**Web Highlight:**  
**[The Best Places to Work in the Federal Government](#)**

**Have you heard about Diversity News? See it [online](#).**

**New Members Appointed to VA Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans.** The Department of Veterans Affairs has announced the appointment of four new members to the Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans.

**Tucson VA to Open Transgender Clinic.** The clinic will provide medical care, mental health, pharmaceutical and social work services specific to transgender Veterans.

**Wounded Warriors Federal Leave Act of 2015.** This new section provides a separate new leave category, to be known as “disabled veteran leave,” to any new Federal employee who is a veteran with a service-connected disability rated at 30 percent or more for purposes of undergoing medical treatment for such disability for which sick leave could regularly be used.

**EEOC Issues Publications on the Rights of Job Applicants and Employees Who Have HIV Infection.** The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission issued two documents addressing workplace rights for individuals with HIV infection under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, including the right to be free from employment discrimination and harassment, and the right to reasonable accommodations in the workplace.

**Carter Opens All Military Occupations, Positions to Women.** Defense Secretary Ash Carter announced that beginning in January 2016, all military occupations and positions will be open to women, without exception.

**EEOC Issues a Statement by Chair Jenny R. Yang to Address Workplace Discrimination Against Individuals Who Are, or Are Perceived to Be, Muslim or Middle Eastern.** In the wake of tragic events at home and abroad, EEOC urges employers and employees to be particularly mindful of instances of harassment, intimidation, or discrimination in the workplace against vulnerable communities.

**EEOC Launches Direct Video Access to ASL Speakers for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.** The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission announced it is launching a new service that will enable individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing whose primary language is American Sign Language to communicate directly with agency staff about issues of discrimination they may be facing.

**Many Bases of Discrimination Can Lead to Harassment, Panel of Experts Tells EEOC Task Force.** The bases of workplace harassment extend beyond sex and race to include age, disability, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, and gender identity, a panel of experts told the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission’s Select Task Force on the Study of Harassment in the Workplace in a public meeting.

**Muslims and Islam: Key Findings in the U.S. and Around the World.** Here are answers to some key questions about Muslims, compiled from several Pew Research Center reports published in recent years.

**Americans Are in the Middle of the Pack Globally When It Comes to Importance of Religion.** More than half of Americans (53%) now say religion is very important in their lives, according to a recent Pew Research Center report.



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