# POSITION DESCRIPTION

**Assistant secretary for Congressional and legislative affairs, Department of veterans affairs**

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| **OVERVIEW** | |
| Senate Committee | Veterans’ Affairs |
| Agency Mission | To fulfill President Lincoln’s promise “to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan” by serving and honoring the men and women who are America’s veterans. |
| Position Overview | The Assistant Secretary for Congressional and Legislative Affairs serves as the principal advisor to the Secretary concerning all legislative and congressional liaison matters, and has overall responsibility for the plans, policies, goals and direction of the Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs. The Assistant Secretary is the principal coordinator of VA's legislative program development, ensures departmental compliance with congressionally mandated reports, and serves as the point of contact with the Government Accountability Office (GAO). |
| Compensation | Level IV $155,500 (5 U.S.C. § 5315)[[1]](#endnote-1) |
| Position Reports to | Secretary of Veterans Affairs |
| **RESPONSIBILITIES** | |
| Management Scope | The VA is the second-largest federal department and employs more than 340,000 individuals in a nationwide network of 144 medical centers, 1,203 community-based outpatient clinics, 300 vet centers and 56 regional offices. The VA also oversees a network of cemeteries, 131 of them national and 90 of them state or tribal. The VA administers its work through three major organizations: the Veterans Health Administration, the Veterans Benefits Administration and the National Cemetery Administration Services. The Department of Veterans Affairs’ budget for fiscal 2018 is over $185 billion. The Assistant Secretary for Congressional and Legislative Affairs manages a team of around 45 full-time equivalents. |
| Primary Responsibilities | * Serves as a link between the agency, the White House Office of Legislative Affairs and members of Congress/the committees of jurisdiction, staying abreast of happenings across all of them; in particular, works closely with the Veterans Health Administration and Veterans Benefits Administration * Manages the agency’s engagement with the annual budget process, determining legislative priorities and presenting them in proposals * Engages with outside stakeholder groups and veterans service organizations; connects them to the work of the agency and Congress on relevant issues * Manages agency engagement with Congress, including completing monthly performance review reports, providing a variety of other statutorily required reports and preparing witnesses to give testimony |
| Strategic Goals and Priorities | [Depends on the policy priorities of the administration] |
| **REQUIREMENTS AND COMPETENCIES** | |
| Requirements | * Understanding of the appropriations process * Working knowledge of the Department of Veterans Affairs * Knowledge of veterans health care programs and benefits, and recent legislative efforts (e.g., the Choice Act) * Experience working in Congress (strongly preferred) * Prior military service (preferred) |
| Competencies | * Ability to communicate effectively with individuals inside the organization and with external stakeholders * Strong interpersonal skills; ability to establish trusted relationships within the organization, and with staff and members of Congress * Ability to quickly respond to crises and engage the appropriate stakeholders |
| **CURRENT AND PAST APPOINTEES** | |

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| Brooks D. Tucker (August 2017 – Present): Senior Adviser to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Department of Veterans Affairs; Policy Adviser, Presidential Transition Team; Senior Policy Adviser, National Security and Veterans’ Affairs, Senator Richard Burr; Lieutenant Colonel and infantry officer, United States Marine Corps |
| Christopher O’Connor (May 2016 – 2017): Interim Assistant Secretary for Congressional and Legislative Affairs, Department of Veterans Affairs; Associate Deputy Assistant Secretary for Congressional and Legislative Affairs, Department of Veterans Affairs; Deputy Legislative Assistant to the Commandant, United States Marine Corps |
| Joan M. Evans (August 2009 – June 2014): Senior Advisor to Secretary Eric K. Shinseki, Department of Veterans Affairs; Chief of Staff, Congresswoman Darlene Hockey |
| Christine O. Hill (January 2008 – January 2009): Deputy Assistant Secretary for Congressional and Legislative Affairs, Department of Veterans Affairs; Director of Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs, Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission; Military Legislative Assistant, Senator Elizabeth Dole; United States Air Force |

# Endnotes

This position description was created with the help of Heidrick & Struggles, a global executive search firm.

1. The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017 (Public Law 115-31, May 5, 2017), contains a provision that continues the freeze on the payable pay rates for certain senior political officials at 2013 levels during calendar year 2017. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)