# POSITION DESCRIPTION

# UnderSecretary for Benefits, 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 mission the Office of the Undersecretary for Benefits, in partnership with the undersecretary for health and the undersecretary for memorial affairs, is to provide benefits and services to veterans, service members, their families and survivors in a responsive, timely and compassionate manner, in recognition of their service to our nation. |
| Compensation | Level III $165,300 (5 U.S.C. § 5314)[[1]](#endnote-1) |
| Position Reports to | Secretary of Veterans Affairs[[2]](#endnote-2) |
| **RESPONSIBILITIES** | |
| Management Scope | The undersecretary for benefits oversees eight distinct business lines. The undersecretary leads more than 21,000 personnel in the Veterans Benefits Administration’s (VBA) Central Office, and 56 regional offices or special processing centers around the world.[[3]](#endnote-3) The undersecretary has 15 direct reports. The Department of Veterans Affairs’ budget for fiscal 2018 is over $185 billion. |
| Primary Responsibilities | * Provides leadership and direction for the VBA * Responsible for VBA's benefits delivery services in all program areas, including compensation, pension, fiduciary, education, home loan guaranty, insurance, vocational rehabilitation, and employment and transition programs * Oversees the development of legislative initiatives, implementation of policies and application of innovative management techniques to increase organizational effectiveness and efficiency[[4]](#endnote-4) * Establishes and communicates VBA’s vision, principles, goals, expectations and outcomes to the Office of the Secretary, other department officials, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), Congress, the General Accountability Office, veterans, veterans service organizations, the media, the general public, personnel currently serving in the military and their families, survivors, and other federal agencies and stakeholders * Develops long-range plans and policies that impact VBA’s long-term direction and strategy * Provides briefings, speeches, congressional testimony and high-level presentations on veterans’ benefits programs * Establishes committees, advisory groups and review bodies as necessary to provide information and advice * Serves as co-chairman of the Benefits Executive Council (BEC) and as a member of the VA-Department of Defense Joint Executive Council (JEC) * Coordinates, develops and recommends milestones for the BEC working groups that are reported in the JEC Strategic Plan and Annual Report * Works closely with the chairman and members of the Senate and House Veterans Affairs Committees (most often with the professional staff members of the committees); the chairman and members of the Senate and House Appropriations Committees (annually); National Veterans Service Organizations (IAVA, RWB, Got Your 6, DAV, VFW, PVA, American Legion, AMVETS, etc.); National Military Service Organizations (MOAA, ROA, Marine Corps league, NGAUS, etc.); state directors/secretaries of veterans affairs; national civic and business organizations and associations; the Department of Defense’s Wounded Warrior Care and Transition Office and other related Department of Defense entities; the assistant secretary of defense for personnel and readiness; service leads; and OMB[[5]](#endnote-5) * Develops a strong working relationship and constant dialogue with the leaders of the National VSOs and MSOs |
| Strategic Goals and Priorities | [Depends on the policy priorities of the administration] |
| **REQUIREMENTS AND COMPETENCIES** | |
| Requirements | * Experience in legislative affairs working with professional staff members on the committees, and awareness of the legislative and public affairs issues affecting the agency * Relationships with and understanding of missions and purpose of major national veterans service organizations and national military service organizations * Strong knowledge of VA benefit and memorial programs or ability to quickly study and learn the programs * Strong Understanding of joint VA–Department of Defense veteran-related programs and collaborations * Veteran status (highly preferable), particularly those with multiple experiences[[6]](#endnote-6) * Alignment to the secretary’s initiatives * Experience with strategic planning, development, implementation and execution, and enterprise-wide goal setting * Master’s degree (preferred) * Background in process improvement (for example, Six Sigma), data-driven decisions and decision-making processes (advantageous) * Quality-management experience and understanding of balance between production and quality * Experience using governance processes * Experience in large enterprise leadership * Federal government experience * Experience in PBBE issues (a plus) * Program management experience * Past DOD experience and an understanding of the customer being served (advantageous) * Experience dealing with Congress * Experience managing complexity as the undersecretary works across eight distinct business lines * Experience with claims processes * Experience creating efficiencies and effectiveness to distribute almost $100 billion in mandatory funds with only an operating budget of 3 cents on the dollar * Experience in an organization that relies on great customer service (helpful) |
| Competencies | * Ability to rapidly assess the state of the organization and create mechanisms to establish new strategy goals and priorities for this administration * Strong communicator and storyteller * Inspirational and motivational leader (critical) * Ability to provide specific goals and priorities and to push those goals organizationally * Strong innovation skills * Ability to create and sustain stakeholder relationships and work collaboratively in highly unionized organization * Excellent leadership skills * Strength in change management * Willingness to engage with employees at all levels and prioritize employee engagement * Ability to manage regional offices from a distance * Ability to respond to congressional oversight accurately and in a timely way * Ability to handle sensitive matters * Willingness to travel to visit the regional offices and meet with front-line staff in order to understand their day-to-day challenges * Excellent negotiation skills * Ability to work across partisan lines |
| **CURRENT AND PAST APPOINTEES** | |
| Paul R. Lawrence (2018 – Present): Vice President, Kaiser Associates; Senior Management Consultant, Ernst & Young, Accenture, the MITRE Corporation, IBM Business Consulting Services, and PricewaterhouseCoopers; Captain, United States Army[[7]](#endnote-7) | |
| Allison A. Hickey (2011 to 2015): Human Capital Management Program Leader, Accenture;[[8]](#endnote-8) Director, Future Total Force Directorate, Deputy Chief of Staff for Plans and Programs, Headquarters, U.S. Air Force; Assistant Deputy Director, Directorate of Strategic Planning, Deputy Chief of Staff for Plans and Programs, United States Air Force[[9]](#endnote-9) | |
| Patrick W. Dunne (2008 to 2010): Assistant Secretary for Policy and Planning, Department of Veterans Affairs; Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy;[[10]](#endnote-10) Special Assistant to the Chief of Naval Operations for Joint Chiefs of Staff Matters/Navy Planner, United States Navy[[11]](#endnote-11) | |
| Daniel L. Cooper (2002 to 2008): Chairman, Claims Processing Task Force, Department of Veterans Affairs; Assistant Chief of Naval Operations for Undersea Warfare, U.S. Navy; Commander, Submarine Force, U.S. Atlantic Fleet, United States Navy[[12]](#endnote-12) | |

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)
2. Romney Readiness Project position description [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Romney Readiness Project position description [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. OPM [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Romney Readiness Project position description [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Romney Readiness Project position description [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. <https://www.va.gov/opa/bios/bio_lawrence.asp> [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. <http://docs.house.gov/meetings/AP/AP18/20150304/103048/HHRG-114-AP18-Bio-HickeyA-20150304.pdf> [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. <http://www.af.mil/AboutUs/Biographies/Display/tabid/225/Article/104696/brigadier-general-allison-a-hickey.aspx> [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. <https://www.va.gov/opa/bios/document/Dunne.pdf> [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. <http://www.navy.mil/navydata/bios/bio.asp?bioID=100> [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. <https://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=1459> [↑](#endnote-ref-12)