



***(December 15, 2011)***

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: MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY TO ALL VA EMPLOYEES**

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**THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**WASHINGTON**

December 14, 2011

**MEMORANDUM FOR ALL EMPLOYEES**

While Congress continues to consider an omnibus appropriations bill and extensions to the payroll tax cut and Unemployment Insurance benefits, there is no guarantee that it will finish all of its work before our current appropriation expires on Friday at midnight. The President has urged the members of Congress to complete the work they were elected to do and has made clear that there is

no excuse for Congress to leave on vacation before all of its work is complete. The President has also made clear that he does not want a government shutdown. Given the realities of the calendar, however, prudent management requires that we plan for an orderly shutdown should Congress fail to complete its work or to pass another short-term continuing resolution that would give it more time to take up these important matters.

Both the President and I know that the uncertainty of the current situation puts federal employees in a difficult position, and we are very much aware that a shutdown would impose hardships on many employees as well as the groups and individuals our agency serves. As we approach the expiration of the current appropriation, our leadership team will provide you with updated information as soon as it becomes available. For now, I want to provide you with information on how the potential funding lapse—should it occur—would impact Federal employees.

If funding lapses, the affected Federal departments and agencies would not be permitted to incur further financial obligations for activities funded by annual appropriations, except those related to the orderly suspension of operations or performance of excepted activities. This means that some employees would be furloughed and unable to work. Our contingency planning for the potential funding lapse includes determining which agency function and employees are excepted from a furlough. Should it become necessary to implement our contingency plans, you will receive informal notice from your manager no later than Friday, December 16. If necessary, formal notice regarding the designation of your position and furlough status will follow at a later date.

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Web site, [www.opm.gov/furlough2011](http://www.opm.gov/furlough2011), addresses some of the questions that I know must be on your mind. As needed, OPM will provide additional pertinent information for federal employees as the week progresses. And our leadership team will do our very best to provide clear information about the status of events as the week progresses.

Thanks to the hard work and dedication of all of you, our Department provides critical services to the American public. Your contributions touch people's lives in so many significant ways, and I want you to know how deeply I appreciate your dedication and your expertise. Thank you for your continued service to the Department and the Nation.

Sincerely,

Eric K. Shinseki