Department of Veterans Affairs

Washington, D.C.

L. Tammy Duckworth

Assistant Secretary for Public and Intergovernmental Affairs

L. Tammy Duckworth was nominated by President Barack Obama to serve as the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Assistant Secretary for Public and Intergovernmental Affairs. She was confirmed by the Senate on April 22, 2009 and sworn in by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Eric Shinseki, on April 24, 2009.

As Assistant Secretary, Duckworth represents and advises the Secretary of Veterans Affairs on matters relating to media and public affairs. She directs departmental communications and oversees programs relating to intergovernmental relations, homeless Veterans, consumer affairs, and the Department's six national rehabilitative special event programs.

Duckworth served as the Director of Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs from 2006-2008. As director, she implemented many first-in-the-nation, cutting-edge programs for Veterans, especially in the areas of health care, mental health, housing and employment. She also initiated a public-private partnership program giving grants to non-profits working on Veterans disability, homelessness, long-term medical care and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

A Major in the Illinois Army National Guard, Duckworth served in Iraq as an Assistant Operations Officer and also flew combat missions as a Black Hawk helicopter pilot. During a mission north of Baghdad in 2004, her aircraft was ambushed and a rocket-propelled grenade struck the helicopter she was co-piloting. She continued to attempt to pilot the aircraft until passing out from blood loss. As a result of the attack, Duckworth lost both of her legs and partial use of one arm. She received many decorations for her actions, including the Purple Heart, the Air Medal, and the Combat Action Badge.

Since her recovery at Walter Reed, Duckworth has dedicated her life to public service, advocating on behalf of disability rights and Veterans. She testified several times before Congress regarding medical care and employment for Veterans. In 2006, Duckworth ran for the U.S. House of Representatives, losing by less than two percent of the vote. In 2007, she received the Hubert H. Humphrey Civil Rights Award and was named the 2008 Disabled Veteran of the Year by the Disabled American Veterans. In 2008, she was selected by Candidate Obama to deliver the presidential campaign's key address on Veterans' rights at the Democratic National Convention. In 2009, she was named as an American Veterans (AMVETS) Silver Helmet award recipient.

Duckworth served as a manager for Rotary International, supervising employees in Tokyo, New Delhi, Sydney, Seoul and Chicago. She speaks fluent Thai and Indonesian and is a published author on the health risks of environmental radon and lung cancer. Her Ph.D. studies on the International Political Economy of Southeast Asia were interrupted by her deployment to Iraq and injury. She has declined her Army medical retirement to continue her service in the National Guard. In 2008, she completed the Chicago Marathon, fulfilling a promise made at Walter Reed. She has also resumed flying and recently received a Statement of Demonstrated Ability from the FAA certifying her to fly aircraft without the use of assistive devices.

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