



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
NEW YORK, NY 10007

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 8, 2016
CONTACT: pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov, (212) 788-2958

**MAYOR DE BLASIO ANNOUNCES NEW DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS'
SERVICES**

NEW YORK— Mayor de Blasio today announced the official creation of the Department of Veterans' Services. The announcement marks 120 days after the Mayor signed Local Law 113 creating the first City agency dedicated to serving veterans and their families.

“We owe so much to the service and sacrifice of the brave men and women, and their families, who selflessly stood up to defend our freedom and to those who continue to serve in harm’s way. In creating the Department of Veterans’ Services, we are fulfilling our moral obligation to honor, respect and serve those who have served us and now deserve access to all the services and support they need to return to civilian life,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**.

Mayor de Blasio said, “Commissioner Sutton has been an exceptional leader for the Mayor’s Office of Veterans' Affairs, and I look forward to working with her as we today create and continue to build this City’s Department of Veterans' Services. I want to thank City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, Council Member Eric Ulrich, the entire City Council, and the tireless veterans’ community for their advocacy community for their support in supporting the creation of this department for our city’s brave veterans and their families.”

“Our veterans deserve to be treated with the love and respect that they have shown to this country and all of us who benefit from their service,” said **Deputy Mayor for Strategic Policy Initiatives Richard Buery**. “When Mayor de Blasio signed legislation creating the Department of Veterans’ Services, I felt proud to belong to an Administration that puts our veterans first. We owe these men and women, and I look forward to working with this new City agency to improve upon the support we provide to them.”

“Under the bold leadership of Mayor Bill de Blasio, I am extraordinarily proud to continue serving veterans and their families in the City of New York, now as the Commissioner of the new Department of Veterans’ Services. On this special day, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, Council Member Eric Ulrich, the City Council, and the city’s

stalwart and unwavering veteran advocates, who have all joined with this administration to make this department possible,” said **Department of Veterans’ Services Commissioner Loree Sutton**. “Today’s historic milestone marks the start of an exciting new chapter towards reaching full DVS operational capacity. Truly, New York City is poised to lead the way in honoring, respecting and supporting the service of those intrepid souls, veterans and their families, who have served on our behalf and continue to serve as our city’s leading natural renewable resource. There simply is no greater privilege.”

“This Department will help New York City fulfill its moral obligation to support and serve our brave veterans and their families,” said **Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito**. “The transition back to civilian life can be challenging for veterans, many of whom contend with physical, emotional and mental needs that require specialized support and care. However, too many men and women face obstacles and red tape when they return home from military service. This agency will be a one-stop-shop for the City’s large and diverse veterans’ community, where our military families can quickly and easily access the wide spectrum of services and benefits available at all levels of government. I thank Veterans Committee Chair Eric Ulrich for his staunch advocacy around this crucial issue.”

"From this day forward, veterans in New York City will have better access to the multitude of services and programs available to those who have defended our great country. The newly established Department of Veterans Services will raise the bar and set an example for every other big city in America to follow. For the first time in our city's history, Veteran services will be properly funded and be an important part of the budget process," said **Council Member Eric Ulrich, Chair of the Committee on Veterans**. "I want to thank Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, Council Member Paul Vallone and all my colleagues on the City Council who helped pass this historic piece of legislation. I also want to thank Mayor de Blasio for signing it into law. Together, we accomplished something truly meaningful that will have a lasting impact for many years to come."

“I am excited to watch the Department of Veterans’ Services as it grows and provides a full-range of services to our city’s heroes. This new department shows New York’s commitment to its veterans, who deserve nothing less,” said **Senator Kirsten Gillibrand**.

“As a Korean War veteran, I applaud Mayor de Blasio for his commitment to serving our veterans and ensuring that New York City will be their strong advocate. Our great city is home to thousands of New Yorkers who have fought bravely in all military conflicts. Regardless of age, color, gender, and sexual orientation, all veterans deserve more than just a “thank you” – they need our support to thrive at home after returning from service. The new department, headed by Commissioner Sutton, will be an invaluable resource to those who sacrificed so much for the freedoms we enjoy,” said **Congressman Charles Rangel**.

On December 10, 2015, in collaboration with the City Council, Speaker Mark-Viverito, the Council's Committee on Veterans, and veteran advocates, Mayor de Blasio signed Local Law 113 creating the Department of Veterans' Services, the first new City agency dedicated to serving the city's veterans and their families. The Department, and its reappointed Commissioner, Retired Army Brigadier General Loree Sutton, will use its resources to continue to house homeless veterans; implement and expand health models to foster the physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing of veterans and their families; expand education and career opportunities for veterans through a rapidly growing network of City, public, private and non-profit partners; and provide in-person and online resources for veterans and their families to access benefits and care. Through the Mayor's unprecedented commitment, generations of New York City veterans and their families have at last witnessed their long-held goal to have a City agency addressing their needs and strengths.

The creation of the department comes during the de Blasio administration's unprecedented efforts to improve and strengthen veteran services and resources in New York City. In the past two years, the administration worked with the City Council to quadruple the funding and staff to support the Mayor's Office of Veterans' Affairs; engaged with our community and private sector partners to deliver on the Mayor's bold pledge to end chronic veteran homelessness and reduced overall veteran homelessness by over 70 percent since taking office; made employment opportunities for veterans and their families a top priority, placing over 2,500 veterans and their spouses in jobs through the City's Small Business Services Workforce1 centers; and as part of the City's IDNYC program, the administration launched a veteran designator to facilitate access to veteran-specific services and benefits for veteran New Yorkers. Veterans' mental health has also played a large role in First Lady Chirlane McCray's Mental Health Roadmap, earning praise from veterans' mental health leaders and advocates. Also, working in partnership with the City Council, the Mayor and Speaker have enlarged and appointed new members to the City's Veterans Advisory Board.

About MOVA and the Department of Veterans' Services

Established in 1987 under Local Law 53, MOVA's mission was to improve the lives of New York City veterans and their families. Leveraging the resources of agencies across the City government, MOVA provided services and connected veterans, active duty military and their families to the vast New York City, state and federal programs, as well as public and private resources which are available throughout the City of New York. With the creation of the Department of Veterans' Services, the City will now have the capacity to develop a sustainable, long-term strategy grounded in City leadership, public-private partnerships, and community engagement. Executing this strategy will yield the robust program development, direct services, research, policy and advocacy work needed to leverage the strengths and support the needs of the burgeoning population of over 500,000 veterans and family members in New York City.

DVS will continue to focus on the administration's goals of connecting our city's veterans to permanent housing, expanding job opportunities for our veteran community, and ensuring our veterans and their families have access to services and support from the City's agencies and federal partners. DVS will be located at One Centre Street on the 22nd floor, where the prior Mayor's Office of Veterans' Affairs' recently moved in October 2015. Working in collaboration with the Veterans Advisory Board, Committee on Veterans and veteran advocates, leaders and family members, DVS will continue to engage with all stakeholders to gain feedback and ideas informing the functions, roles and responsibilities of the Department of Veterans' Services.

About Commissioner Loree Sutton

Retired Army Brigadier General Loree Sutton, MD was appointed by Mayor Bill de Blasio as Commissioner of the Mayor's Office of Veterans' Affairs on September 1, 2014. Sutton's culminating military assignment was to serve as the Founding Director of the Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury (DCoE) from 2007 to 2010. Before assuming DCoE directorship, Sutton commanded the Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center at Fort Hood, the nation's largest power projection military installation with over 100,000 service and family members. Prior deployment experience includes serving in Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait and Egypt in support of the first Gulf War and the Multinational Force and Observers peacekeeping mission. Military awards and honors include Bronze Star Medal; Presidential Service Badge (White House Fellow); and Legion of Merit. Sutton co-founded Threshold GlobalWorks in 2011 and served as Co-Director until August 2014. She is devoted to the public health imperative of designing 'working community' approaches that harness the strengths of veterans and their loved ones while promoting healing from the wounds of war, seen and unseen.

"New York City's commitment to our veteran community is an integral part of our values. IDNYC's veteran designation and outreach to veteran communities allows us to strengthen the ways in which veterans access City resources and services," said **Commissioner Nisha Agarwal of the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs**.

"We are proud to be making our veterans a priority by providing them with critical services in our Workforce1 career centers. Through career, training and job placement services, we have connected veterans and military spouses to more than 26,000 career development and training services and over 3,600 job opportunities," said **Gregg Bishop, Commissioner of the Department of Small Business Services**. "We also have a variety of free business services available to veterans through NYC Business Solutions, including pro-bono legal services, access to capital, help navigating government, and specialized business courses."

Staten Island Borough President James S. Oddo said, “I was impressed by General Sutton from the first time I met with her, and I know that with the additional resources she will have by leading a full-fledged city agency will only mean good things for our veterans. Great work by my former colleague Eric Ulrich for spearheading this effort on behalf of our veterans who have sacrificed so much for our nation.”

“Veterans have unique needs and face unique challenges – and we have a unique obligation to support them, as men and women who have served our country in uniform,” said **Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer**. “I look forward to the new Department of Veteran’s Affairs offering streamlined services, support and opportunities to our city’s veteran community.”

“As Americans, we sit under the tree of freedom that has been sustained by the blood and sacrifice of the men and women who have courageously risked their lives to protect us,” said **Brooklyn Borough President Eric L. Adams**. “We have a shared responsibility to protect our veterans upon their return home, providing comprehensive services that help them as they seek to advance their futures as well as raise healthy children and families. By establishing the Department of Veterans’ Services, Mayor de Blasio has honored their sacrifices on behalf of the entire City of New York, recognizing their undying commitment to our nation.”

“More veterans call Queens home than any other borough, and we honor their service to our nation and their sacrifices for our freedoms,” said **Queens Borough President Melinda Katz**. “This administration has demonstrated its commitment with innovative ways to better serve our veterans, from elevating veterans’ affairs from a mayoral office into full departmental status, to opening its first Satellite Office here in the Borough of Queens. Special thanks to City Council Veterans Committee Chair Eric Ulrich for his leadership in introducing the original bill that made the creation of the new Department possible.”

“Creating the Department of Veterans’ Services is a monumental and historic step towards fulfilling our commitment to the veterans who have sacrificed so much for our behalf,” said **Council Member Paul Vallone**. “This new agency will finally have the budget and operational scope to truly provide the level of service that our city’s veterans need and deserve. Today’s announcement is a crucial first step towards having the agency fully up and running.”

“The creation of a Department of Veterans’ Services reflects New York City’s commitment to meeting the needs and honoring the sacrifices of veterans and their families. I look forward to working with the City’s newest agency to expand veterans’ access to housing, employment, health care and other critical services. I applaud Mayor de Blasio, First Lady Chirlane McCray and my colleagues on the Council’s Committee on Veterans for their unwavering dedication to improving the lives of our City’s veterans,” said **Council Member Fernando Cabrera**.

State Senator James Sanders Jr. said, "Having served in the Marine Corps, and as a senator representing a district where many veterans live, I am pleased to welcome this new agency, which will make it more convenient for the brave men and women who have served our country to access services, particularly in the areas of health, housing, education and employment. While this is an important step forward, we can and should be doing more to improve the lives of veterans, and I hope the City will continue its efforts to strengthen its outreach to this population."

Senator Marty Golden said, "Today is a great day for all veterans who call New York City home. I commend Mayor Bill de Blasio and Council Member Eric Ulrich for their vision and support that has led to the creation of the new Department of Veterans' Services. Throughout the five boroughs, and returning home every day, this Department will now be appropriately equipped to serve the needs of those who have answered the call to serve our Nation."

"The new Department of Veterans' Services will go a long way to provide assistance to the veteran population of the City of New York," said **Assembly Member Michael DenDekker, Chair of the Committee on Veteran's Affairs**. "We need to do everything we can to ensure that veterans have access to the programs that they need and deserve. Having this Department open to serve the needs of those veterans in New York City is an important step in our continued efforts to fight for those who have fought for us."

"The formal creation of the DVS is a tremendous milestone for New York City's veterans and their families. This continues a string of recent successes as New York seeks to be the national leader in local veteran policies," said **Todd Haskins, Chair of the Veterans Advisory Board**.

"Today's name changing from the Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs to the Department of Veterans Services continues the legislative process started last December and moves the City one-step closer towards creating a full-fledged agency by July. This new agency will be a centralized place where New York City's 225,000 veterans and family members — many who face a variety of social and economic challenges, or who are transitioning back to civilian life, can get the help and services they need. I once again congratulate Mayor de Blasio, Speaker Mark-Viverito, Councilman Ulrich and the entire City Council on this symbolically historic day," said **Joe Bello, Founder of NY MetroVets and Secretary of the Veterans Advisory Board**.

"It has taken decades and half a dozen mayors, some who were veterans to arrive at this monumental day. I use monumental as this is a lasting testament to what others before us did, as veterans and advocates in defending our freedoms and later our needs as veterans. I personally, and on behalf of Staten Island – and all veterans – commend mayor de Blasio and the City

Council for creating a veterans agency for the 21st century. We will fulfill our new mission as we fulfilled all our previous missions all over the globe. Now, we focus on the greatest city and capital of the world,” said **Charles Greinsky, Commander of the Jewish War Veterans Staten Island and Member of the Veterans Advisory Board.**

“This has been a long time coming but truly worth the wait! New York City will now be able to further the delivery of services and allow veterans to be an intricate part in decision making and planning that affects veterans past, present and future,” said **Wendy McClinton, President and CEO of Black Veterans for Social Justice, and Member of the Veterans Advisory Board.**

“I have observed and interacted with the Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs since the Lindsey administration through its ups and downs. Under Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Sutton, MOVA really flourished, however the transformation to the Department of Veterans Services is beyond our wildest dreams. We can't wait for it to be fully operational, particularly in the boroughs,” said **John Rowan, President and CEO of Vietnam Veterans of America, and Member of the Veterans Advisory Board.**

“The commitment of Mayor de Blasio in establishing the Department of Veterans’ Services and the dedication of our Commissioner, Loree Sutton is unique amongst all cities in this nation. To the veterans community, this represents a 24/7, 365 day commitment to provide the full range of support for health, wellness and the future through employment. Moreover, the Mayor and Commissioner are well aware that this is not charity, this is an obligation to the half of one percent that have worn the cloth of this nation in defense of our freedoms,” said **Bruce Mosler, Chair of Global Brokerage, Cushman & Wakefield, Inc.**

"The United War Veterans Council enthusiastically commends the greater attention and resources being offered to the veterans community in New York City through the establishment of the Department of Veterans Services," said **United Veterans Council President Dan McSweeney.** "We have worked closely with MOVA since its inception in the 1980s and are gratified this historic breakthrough has finally come to pass. Now is the time to double-down on the effort to ensure veterans and their families receive the support they deserve in fully integrating with our great city's neighborhoods, schools, businesses, markets and cultural institutions. This investment of public capital will bear fruit through the direct assistance it provides, the relationships it nurtures and the opportunities it generates for veterans to achieve their vast potential as New Yorkers. The establishment of DVS will greatly advance New York's emerging role as a national magnet for talented and community-minded men and women who have previously served our nation in uniform. We look forward to continuing our excellent working relationship with DVS in producing America's Parade on Veterans Day each year. On the 15th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks it's especially important to unveil more impactful ways of meeting veterans where they are on the spectrum of needs and the establishment of DVS does

that and more. Once again, New York leads the entire country in developing innovative approaches to municipal governance. We salute the government officials, veteran advocates and other stakeholders who worked tirelessly to make DVS a reality. Now the real work begins."

"We are proud to see our advocacy over the last two years for this critical department to serve New York City's veteran population realized," said **Paul Rieckhoff, IAVA Founder and CEO**. "The establishment of the Department of Veterans' Services will not just change the city, but the entire nation. The veteran community is grateful for the leadership of individuals like Council Member Eric Ulrich, Chair of the Committee on Veterans, and Public Advocate Letitia James who fought to get us to this point. Mayor de Blasio's action today is appreciated and will serve the city's 230,000 veterans and their families well beyond his time in office."

"Congratulations at last to the new NYC Department of Veterans' Services on coming into being! The NYC Veterans Alliance is proud to have worked toward the passage of legislation creating this vital, independent agency, and we are grateful to Commissioner Sutton and her growing team for all that they are doing to ensure that MOVA will transition seamlessly into its broadened role in serving the NYC veterans community. We believe that with proper resourcing, strategy, and support, DVS will be able to lead the nation on improving the lives of veterans, service members, and their families at the local level. We look forward to having continued input on budgeting, policies, and outcomes that impact our community as advocates and partners in the success of the Department of Veterans' Services," said **Kristen L. Rouse, Army Veteran and Founding Director of the NYC Veterans Alliance**.

"What an exciting time to be a Veteran in NYC, and we salute the City for bringing to us the Department of Veterans' Services," said **Retired CMSgt Edward W. Schloeman, Chair of Operation Warrior Shield**.

"We are extremely impressed with Mayor de Blasio's efforts to create New York City's Department of Veterans' Services," said **Retired Army Colonel Jim McDonough, Managing Director of Programs and Services at Syracuse University's Institute for Veterans and Military Families**. "Not only is this a decisive step toward better aligning services for the city's military-connected members and their families, it also represents a call to municipalities across the country to dedicate the same to their military-connected members to ensure they receive the very best care, services and resources to succeed."

"New York City is home to more than 200,000 veterans who have courageously served our country and defended our freedom," said **Christopher Perkins, Managing Director at Citi**. "The Department of Veterans' Services will help assist veterans and their families as they navigate the transition back to civilian life. Through our Citi Salutes initiative, we are committed

to serving the military community and working with partners like the City of New York to support our brave service members and their families.”

"We're ecstatic about Mayor de Blasio's efforts to expand the City's capabilities to serve our Military members, Veterans and their families through the newly created Department of Veterans' Services," said **Dan Brillman, CEO of Unite U.S.** "This is an innovative step towards broadening the city's ability to provide the best care and services for years to come, and we believe this sets an important precedent for other cities to follow."

###