



**THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS  
WASHINGTON**

January 5, 2017

**A MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**  
50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the National Historic Preservation Act

I am pleased to join President Obama in celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the National Historic Preservation Act. When President Johnson signed the Act on October 15, 1966, the United States of America committed itself to being a steward of our diverse historic sites, buildings and landscapes. We at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) are custodians of many such places, including 14 National Historic Landmarks, all of our National cemeteries and the majority of our medical centers.

Managing these important assets entrusted to us requires striking a balance between our strong commitment to the future and a respect for the past. VA's challenge is to provide world-class health care and other benefits that Veterans have earned while avoiding unnecessary damage to those places that represent our unique history.

I am proud of VA's participation on the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, which promotes the responsible preservation, enhancement and sustainable use of our nation's historic resources to the President, Congress, Federal agencies and the American people. A growing body of research shows that heritage is important to health and maintaining a thoughtful relationship with our past is a healthy human condition. VA is working across the country to keep that relationship alive and vibrant in support of our Veterans and their home communities, while delivering services in the most effective and efficient manner possible.

Each of us within VA has a responsibility to think creatively about how we can continue to renovate and repurpose historic buildings and lands to accommodate modern programs and services to better the lives of Veterans and their families. I know you are up to the task as we continue this important work into the future.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robert A. McDonald".

Robert A. McDonald