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VVA Holds Elections at National Convention: Tom Burke to Serve as President

(New Orleans, Louisiana) – Tom Burke of New Philadelphia, Ohio, was elected to serve his first term as Vietnam Veterans of America National President at VVA's 22nd biennial National Convention held this week in New Orleans, Louisiana. Burke previously served three terms as VVA National Vice President and multiple tours on the VVA National Board of Directors. He volunteered for military service in the U.S. Navy in 1963, serving aboard the U.S.S. *Hancock* in his final year.

"To my mind, VVA over the past now approaching fifty years, has become the best VSO in the land. I have been able to represent our VVA members within the highest government offices in the country. I can guarantee you that our officials in Washington know who we are, and they ask for our opinions on many items. They respect us, because we respect them. Whatever we face, whatever road we choose, whatever comes our way, our organization has risen to the occasion," Burke said.

John Riling III of Michigan, VVA member since 1986, was elected to serve his first term as VVA National Vice President, following years of serving in local, state, and national roles, including as Region 5 Director and many years as President of the Michigan State Council. Riling served his tour in Vietnam with the 2nd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment (Blackhawks) from 1970-1971.

Bill Meeks, Jr., of The Woodlands, Texas, was reelected to his eighth two-year term as VVA National Secretary. Meeks served with the U.S. Marine Corps for almost three years. During his 1968 tour of duty in Vietnam, he served as a squad/platoon radioman and received three Purple Heart medals for battlefield injuries.

Dottie Barickman, of Council Bluffs, Iowa, was elected to serve her first term as VVA National Treasurer, following years of local, state, and national service. A VVA member since 1987, she has participated in VVA's National

Finance, Constitution, Women Veterans, and PTSD committees, as well as serving on the board as a Director at Large. Barickman served in the U.S. Air Force from 1970–1974. Stationed at the Lackland, Barksdale, and Offutt bases, she specialized in data automation and computer programming.

In addition, 19 National Board of Directors were elected: Ten At-Large and nine Regional. The At-Large directors are Liz Cannon (NC); Gumersindo Gomez (MA); Charlie Hobbs (TN); Ken Holybee (CA); Dennis Howland (UT); Frederick Gasior (NY); Charlie Stapleton (MO); Dan Stenvold (ND); Steve Williams (VA); and Sandie Wilson (MI). The nine regional directors elected to serve a 2025-2027 term are: Region 1, Justin Latini (MA); Region 2, Ted Wilkinson (NY); Region 3, Charlie Montgomery (VA); Region 4, Marc Goodell (FL); Region 5, Gary Estermyer (MI); Region 6, John Margowski (WI); Region 7, Terry Courville (LA); Region 8, Chuck Renevier (MT); and Region 9, Dick Southern (CA).

Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) is the nation's only congressionally chartered veterans service organization dedicated to the needs of Vietnam-era veterans and their families. VVA's founding principle is "Never again will one generation of veterans abandon another."