



January 3, 2023

Dear Honorable Elected Officials -

I have known Commissioner Larry Herke for the past 30 years. We were field artillery officers together, commanded units together, deployed together, and were senior leaders in the Minnesota National Guard during the same period of time. He is a consummate professional, a caring and compassionate leader, and someone who cares deeply about Minnesota's Veterans.

Commissioner Herke believes in servant leadership and service to the nation. He served on active duty, deployed in the longest Brigade level deployment in the Army's history, and retired as a Colonel after 31 years of service. His son Jon, emulating his father, served as well.

Commissioner Herke is also a transformational leader. As the Construction and Facilities Management Officer responsible for all the real property in the Minnesota Army National Guard, he managed construction, services, and maintenance budgets in excess of \$65 million. His strategic plan for facility management is a model used throughout the National Guard.

As the Commissioner of Veterans Affairs, he completed designs of three new Veterans Homes at Montevideo, Bemidji, and Preston and submitted all documents to the Federal VA to be considered for the State Grants Program. His expertise is without question.

Most impressive to me has been his focus on homeless Veterans. He has appropriately allocated resources, created programs to cover existing gaps, and personally led from the front at Stand Downs and community events to ensure the highest level of leadership was represented. We simply would not be making the progress we are without Commissioner Herke's leadership.

This past session he led the effort to win support from your colleagues to secure significant funding to end Veteran homelessness by increasing housing options. We have used that funding to lower the chronic and long term homeless population to under 75 Veterans. We are approaching Functional Zero and will become the fourth state, and first large state, to end Veteran homelessness. This is thanks to Commissioner Herke's leadership.

Respectfully,

Neal Loidolt
President & CEO
Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans
Major General, retired