

## **My Wishes for 2019**

Jim Mattis resigned as Secretary of Defense a couple weeks ago. Here is what he said to the Defense Department as he left “Our Department’s leadership, civilian and military remains in the best possible hands. I am confident that each of you remains undistracted from our sworn mission to support and defend the Constitution while protecting our way of life. Our Department is proven to be at its best when the time are most difficult. So keep the faith in our country and hold fast, alongside our allies, aligned against our foes. One of my wishes for 2019 is that the new Secretary is a Veteran and preferably one who has seen combat. The person ordering our soldiers into combat should have been there.

As I wrote last week, the Department of Veterans Affairs has not been supporting and promoting their program on suicide. I wish the VA would restart the program and make sure that all Veterans are taken care of in 2019.

The good news in 2018 is that the number of homeless Veterans in the US dropped. The bad news is that many are still homeless. Many agencies and organizations in addition to the VA are working on this problem. For instance, the Fargo VA and the HRA of Clay County have a joint program to address this issue locally. My wish for 2019 is to see that number drop significantly.

As reported earlier, checks for students attending college under the GI Bill have been very late in getting to the Veterans. My wish for 2019 is that all Veterans using the GI Bill receive their monthly checks in a timely manner.

The amount of time a Veteran has to wait for a medical appointment is reported to be 51 days by the VA and 64 days by the GAO. Of course, the government shutdown is making that worse with some VA employees furloughed. My wish for 2019 is that the VA is able to fix its scheduling software and to speed up the process for appointments.

I wish that our active duty and deployed guard troops are strongly supported by our president and members of congress. If troops are ordered into harm’s way, I wish all of America will support them. If you see a service member in uniform, please take the time to thank them for their service. As you see Veterans in our community, thank them for their service.

I wish that the newly elected Moorhead mayor and all city council members will work diligently to make Moorhead better. Moorhead has a wonderful and dedicated staff, so treat them well.

As a long-time Dragon basketball fan, I wish that the women’s and men’s team take first place in the conference and move on to post-season play. The Dragon women’s gpa for the past season was a lofty 3.686, the seventh highest in the nation in division II.

Finally, I wish all my friends, family and readers of this column the very best for 2019.