

Letter of Transmittal



To the President of the United States, President of the Senate, President pro tempore of the Senate, and Speaker of the House of Representatives:

I am pleased to submit the Department of Veterans Affairs' Annual Performance Report FY 2001, as required by the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993. This report describes in detail how well we executed our responsibilities during fiscal year 2001, especially in regard to our top priorities:

- improving the timeliness and quality of claims processing,
- providing access to high-quality health care, especially to disabled and low income veterans, and
- ensuring access to burial benefits and maintaining national cemeteries as national shrines.

The events following the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, remind us of the awesome sacrifices the men and women of America's armed forces make on our behalf. Most of the 25 million living veterans have served during times of war. The Nation owes a tremendous debt to them, and we in the Department of Veterans Affairs are proud of the role we play in helping discharge that debt.

Although quality of claims processing improved significantly, timeliness remains unacceptable. A task force I commissioned to examine a wide range of issues affecting speedy processing of claims issued its report in October 2001. We are now pursuing implementation of a variety of short-term and mid-term recommendations. I am determined to solve the timeliness problem during my tenure as Secretary.

Veterans health care sets the national standard in patient safety and the measurement of quality outcomes. Our National Center for Patient Safety has been recognized for its achievements by the Innovations in American Government Program, administered by Harvard University and the Council for Excellence in Government.

To meet the burial needs of veterans, we began operations at Fort Sill National Cemetery in Oklahoma and extended burial operations at six others. Five new state veterans cemeteries were opened through VA grants. We started a long-term project to maintain the national cemeteries as national shrines.

Our veterans deserve the best our country can offer, and I intend to make sure they receive the care and service they have earned.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anthony J. Principi". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Anthony J. Principi
Secretary of Veterans Affairs