

COMMITTEES:
ARMED SERVICES

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
READINESS – CHAIRMAN

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
SEAPOWER AND EXPEDITIONARY FORCES

JUDICIARY

SUBCOMMITTEE ON CRIME, TERRORISM,
AND HOMELAND SECURITY

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
THE CONSTITUTION



J. Randy Forbes
United States Congress
4th District, Virginia

2438 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-6365

139 AIRPORT DRIVE
EMPORIA, VA 23847
(434) 634-5575

9401 COURTHOUSE ROAD, SUITE 201
CHESTERFIELD, VA 23832
(804) 318-1363

505 INDEPENDENCE PARKWAY
LAKE CENTER II—SUITE 104
CHESAPEAKE, VA 23320
(757) 382-0080

June 6, 2012

The Honorable Eric K. Shinseki
Secretary, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Ave. NW
Washington, D.C. 20420

Dear Secretary Shinseki:

I write to express my concern that the Department of Veterans Affairs has not yet turned the corner on its severe claims backlog in spite of considerable efforts to streamline the claims process through initiatives such as the eBenefits program, newly released Disability Benefits Questionnaires, and the upcoming rollout of the Veterans Benefit Management System (VBMS). With pending claims topping 904,000 at the end of May, and nearly 65 percent of those claims overdue by more than 125 days, this remains a salient issue for our nation's veterans. Considering that claims receipts are expected to reach 1.25 million in 2013, prompt, substantive action is required to both critically assess and address the root causes of the claims backlog and more importantly implement meaningful reform to the claims processing system.

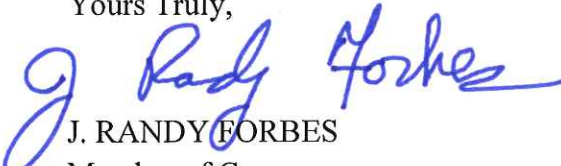
As you know, on May 31st the House of Representatives passed the Fiscal Year 2013 Military Construction and Veterans' Affairs Appropriations bill (H.R. 5854), which contains specific direction for the Department of Veterans Affairs to prioritize its efforts towards the regional offices with the most egregious claims backlogs and report quarterly on the progress towards VBMS adoption nationwide. In light of this direction, I have the following additional questions for the Department:

1. What efforts have been made to stand up a standardized and uniform national training initiative for VA employees charged with claims processing responsibilities?
2. What processes and controls has the Veterans' Benefits Administration employed to convert older legacy paper claims to a digital format?

3. What tools does the VA employ to help improve accountability for the high claims error rate?
4. Is the planned architecture for paperless claims processing adequate to support the anticipated influx of new claims as the war in Afghanistan draws to a close and more eligible veterans submit claims?
5. Outside of efforts to streamline the claims process and initiate paperless claims processing, what actions is the VA taking in other areas to innovatively reduce the pressure that contributed to the current claims backlog?

Thank you for addressing these questions so that I can assure the veterans in Virginia's Fourth Congressional District that they will see real improvements in the timeliness of what can at times be a very frustrating claims process. As always, thank you for your service to the Department of Veterans' Affairs, and the Nation. I look forward to hearing from you. With kind personal regards, I am

Yours Truly,



J. RANDY FORBES
Member of Congress