

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 25, 2013

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

As military veterans and those actively serving in the Guard and Reserve, we are increasingly concerned with the many difficulties our fellow veterans are experiencing when filing compensation claims with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Veterans of all generations deserve the highest quality care and timely delivery of services; and right now, the VA benefit delivery is putting America's veterans at a disadvantage.

Despite the commitment of VA Secretary Eric Shinseki to streamline the disability claims process and bring the VA into the digital age, almost 900,000 claims remain unprocessed, with over 69 percent of claimants waiting more than 125 days. The claims backlog has also increased by 2,000 percent in the past four years. By VA's own projections, the overall number of pending claims is expected to rise to a staggering *1 million* in the near future.

This is not progress that veterans and taxpayers expect. As Secretary Shinseki recently noted, these problems are not the result of a lack of resources. While other department budgets have seen reductions, VA received \$25 billion in additional funding since 2009, including \$500 million to migrate the claims process online. Four years later, only 3 percent of claims have been digitally converted and 97 percent of claims are still adjudicated on paper.

Even more troubling are the wait times at some VA centers. Secretary Shinseki himself said at his 2009 confirmation hearing, "there is no reason why a veteran submits a claim, takes a number and waits for six months." We agree. Unfortunately, veterans continue to wait on average 273 days for a claim to be resolved. In some metro areas, the wait time is closer to 2 years. Regardless of the reason for a surge in new claims, we are confident that you agree such excessive wait times are unacceptable.

The VA is clearly on the wrong track. Mr. President, we know you care deeply for America's veterans, but it is important for you—as Commander in Chief—to publicly acknowledge the problems within VA and the necessity for reforms and leadership that

are capable of alleviating the claims backlog and improving the benefit delivery system. We urge you to take a strong position in support of America's veterans and use your influence and authority to ensure VA fulfills its duty and obligation to those who have served and sacrificed.

We stand ready to work with you to address the challenges at VA and begin the process of reform and recovery.

Sincerely,



Duncan Hunter
Member of Congress



Tim Murphy
Member of Congress



Adam Kinzinger
Member of Congress



Tom Rooney
Member of Congress



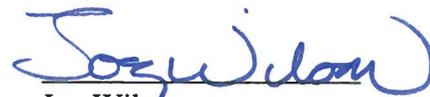
John Kline
Member of Congress



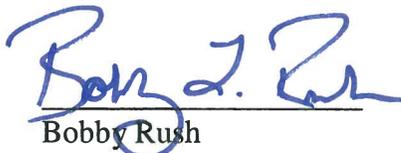
Darrell Issa
Member of Congress



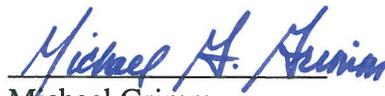
John Conyers
Member of Congress



Joe Wilson
Member of Congress



Bobby Rush
Member of Congress



Michael Grimm
Member of Congress



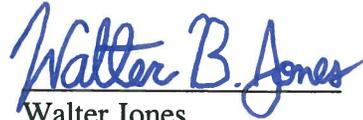
Tom Cotton
Member of Congress



Joe Heck
Member of Congress



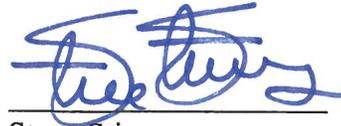
Steve Palazzo
Member of Congress



Walter Jones
Member of Congress



Mike Conaway
Member of Congress



Steve Stivers
Member of Congress



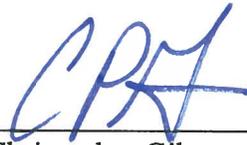
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Member of Congress



Brett Guthrie
Member of Congress



Tim Griffin
Member of Congress



Christopher Gibson
Member of Congress



Ron Desantis
Member of Congress



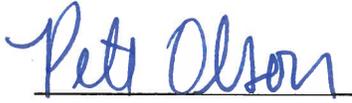
Paul Cook
Member of Congress



Paul Broun
Member of Congress



Todd Young
Member of Congress



Pete Olson
Member of Congress



Doug Collins
Member of Congress