

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1011

October 4, 2023

The Honorable Denis McDonough
Secretary
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary McDonough,

I am concerned regarding the extensive and unacceptable wait times associated with Board of Veterans Appeals (BVA) decisions. Not only are Georgia veterans reporting years-long wait times to receive a decision on their benefits claim decision appeals, but they also describe a lack of clear and consistent communication about estimated wait times and their claim's place on the Board's decision docket.

I am concerned that Georgia's veterans are not receiving the clear and consistent information they deserve regarding their appeals, leaving these veterans and their families in limbo as they wait years for the benefits to which they are potentially entitled. Like you, I am aware of the significant challenges the VA faces in addressing this issue and that the process suffers from significant personnel shortages and heavy Veterans Law Judge caseloads.

Accordingly, I ask for your timely response to the following questions:

1. What factors are driving delays in the benefits decision appeals process?
2. Has the VA performed an end-to-end audit of the efficiency of the BVA process to determine bottlenecks or redundant actions in the process? If so, please provide my office with a copy of the results of the audit.
3. What is the VA doing to address personnel shortfalls, including vacant veteran service organization liaison positions, that may be exacerbating BVA hearing and decision wait times?
4. What communications procedures are in place to ensure that individual veterans are kept fully informed about their place on the BVA docket and their expected wait time?
5. What systems of accountability exist within the VA when estimated wait times communicated to veterans pass without progress on the appeal or a status update to the veteran?
6. What portion of the delays can be attributed to the elapsed time between the administrative process and the transmittal of necessary information to the BVA? What actions is the VA taking to address delays during this stage of the process?

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7. What additional resources or authorities are needed to address lengthy wait times in the BVA process?

Our veterans have earned efficient and effective service from their government. Waiting years to appeal for—let alone receive—benefits to which they may be entitled betrays the sacred compact we make with those who wear the uniform and undermines faith in our institutions.

Thank you for your prompt response to this inquiry.

Sincerely,



Jon Ossoff
United States Senator