



SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
1000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

JUN 24 2013

The Honorable Jeff Miller
Chairman
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for your letter, which underscores the importance of continued and enhanced collaboration with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The Department of Defense (DoD) will continue to do all we can to assist VA with veterans disability benefits claim processing. In addition to the assistance DoD has been providing VA, we have taken a number of new and immediate steps to provide more support to VA as outlined below.

We have begun to certify that Service Treatment Records are complete with all known records when we transfer them to VA per its request. We will monitor our progress as we fully implement this process. We expedited the deployment of the Healthcare Artifacts and Image Management Solution which will digitize paper-based medical information on all separating Service members. This will be in place by the end of December 2013.

We have: (1) placed a team of DoD experts at the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA); (2) created user accounts for VBA personnel that provide them with direct access to our records systems for financial and service information, personnel records information portal, and appropriate medical records (in progress); (3) provided 15 soldiers to support to the Integrated Disability Evaluation System in Seattle; (4) converted Service Treatment Records to an electronic printed format so they can be quickly scanned and used; (5) agreed to conduct a separation health assessment for all Service members not requesting a disability rating upon separation from the military; and (6) assembled a team of liaison officers to provide direct support to Secretary Eric Shinseki on these issues.

Secretary Shinseki and I and our senior staffs with responsibility for this project are scheduled for another joint meeting on July 2.

I remain open to additional requests VA may have to help reduce its backlog. Identical letters have been sent to the other signees. Thank you for your strong and important support of our Veterans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Eric Shinseki", is written over a blue horizontal line.

cc:
The Honorable Eric K. Shinseki
Secretary of Veterans Affairs