SECRETARY OF THE VA’S PRIORITIES

**Customer Service**

We will be driven by customer feedback, unified Veteran Data, and employees characterized by a customer-centric mindset to make accessing VA services seamless, effective, efficient and emotionally resonant for our Veterans.

**Mission Act**

VA is committed to ensuring Veterans have a wide variety of options for their health and well-being as mandated, especially through a Community Care Network and expansion of support to caregivers of Veterans.

**Electronic Health Record**

Modernize our appointment system to connect VA to the Department of Defense, private health care providers, and private pharmacies.

**Transforming and Business Systems**

Ensuring VA resources are spent on the care and services Veterans need most, and systems and technology that enable employees to enhance the quality of the care and services Veterans deserve.
VBA Three Priorities

Provide Veterans with the benefits they have earned in a manner that honors their service.

Ensure we are strong fiscal stewards of the money entrusted to us.

Foster a culture of collaboration.

Focus is on continuing to improve timeliness, increase quality, and resolve legacy appeals.

Applying financial management best practices to execute our budget.

Collaborating with all those who support our Veterans: traditional VSOs, post-9/11 Veterans groups, state and county VSOs, Congress, GAO, IG, OMB, and other federal agencies.
VBA Beneficiaries Served & Dollars Paid in FY2019 Q2

VBA FOOTPRINT:

- **Compensation**: Paid $23.8B to nearly 4.8M Veterans & Survivors
- **Pension**: Paid $806M to nearly 251K beneficiaries
- **Education**: Provided $3.0B to 488K beneficiaries for all EDU programs
- **VR&E**: Over 4K Veterans received employment, independent living, or persisting in school
- **Housing**: Guaranteed 119K loans totaling $31.9B
- **Insurance**: Provided $1.2T in coverage to 6M beneficiaries

“...to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow, and his orphan.” — Abraham Lincoln
The mission of the Veterans Benefits Administration is to serve as a leading advocate for Servicemembers, Veterans, their families and survivors, delivering benefits and services that honor their service, assist in their readjustment, enhance their lives, and engender their full trust.

Seattle Overview

758 Employees

55% Veterans

VSC
VR&E

DRAS
DROC
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<tr>
<th>INITIATIVE</th>
<th>RESULT</th>
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<tr>
<td>JULY 4&lt;sup&gt;TH&lt;/sup&gt; CHALLENGE</td>
<td>COMPLETE! Claims processors were able to complete the challenge. As a result, they were given the 5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; of July as a holiday.</td>
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<td>TELE_COUNSELING</td>
<td>COMPLETE! Veterans are able to reduce the need for travel. Appointments with beneficiaries average over 1,000 per month.</td>
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<td>LABOR DAY CHALLENGE</td>
<td>COMPLETE! Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors were able to complete the challenge nationwide. As a result, they were given the Friday, August 30, 2019 as a holiday.</td>
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<td>TIMLINESS OF CLAIMS PROGRESS</td>
<td>The FY19 Quarter 2 shows the average days to complete is 127.8 days, just 2.8 days above the 125 day target.</td>
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<td>HOMELOAN GUARANTEES</td>
<td>31K Veterans were able to avoid foreclosure in FY19 Q2. Specially adapted house assistive technology grants totaling 800K were awarded in the 2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; quarter as well.</td>
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<td><strong>PAPER EXTRACTION</strong> digitized inactive paper claims to reduce processing time and save money previously budgeted for storage.</td>
<td>COMPLETE! VBA removed nearly 8 million files across nearly 58 locations, improving processing time, reducing our physical footprint and saving taxpayer dollars.</td>
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<td><strong>CENTRALIZED INTAKE</strong> centralizes and digitizes all claims, further streamlining our processes and creating a fully digital operating environment where claims may be processed and delivered electronically.</td>
<td>Scanned over 4.57B IMAGES since inception, and reduced the average mail processing time for Regional Offices (ROs) to 2.8 CALENDAR DAYS from a peak of 55 business days in the beginning of 2015.</td>
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<td><strong>AUTO-ESTABLISHMENT OF CLAIMS</strong> populates data from scanned images to establish new claims for Veterans; zero VA staff data entry.</td>
<td>Over 84K CLAIMS have been auto-established since inception in May 2017. Has the potential to decrease claim processing time by UP TO 5 DAYS while also decreasing error rates through automation.</td>
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<td><strong>NATIONAL WORK QUEUE</strong> prioritizes and distributes workload across the nation based on VBA workforce’s real-time capacity.</td>
<td>The average days to complete a Veteran’s claim is 108 DAYS FYTD. Now processing Pension claims and managing new appeals work in the NWQ.</td>
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<td><strong>CENTRALIZED BENEFITS COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT</strong> centralizes all printing and mailing, which all 56 regional offices previously did individually, to improve productivity and streamline correspondence with Veterans on their claims.</td>
<td>Over 12.6M letters have been generated, resulting in SAVINGS OF APPROX. $3.5M in postage costs.</td>
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Pre-Discharge Redesign

- Redesigned Benefits Delivery at Discharge (BDD) and Quick Start into cohesive Pre-Discharge Program

- Eliminates Quick Start and changes the deadline for BDD claims submissions from 60 days prior to discharge to 90 days

- Allows extra time to ensure medical exams can be conducted and evaluated, and claims rated, prior to separation

- Received over 71K BDD claims since redesign on Oct 1, 2017

- Completing 41% of claims within 30 days of discharge
POLICY UPDATES FY19

• Presumption of Herbicide Exposure and Presumption of Disability During Service for Reservists Presumed Exposed to Herbicides (effective 10/22/2018)
• Appeals Modernization (effective 02/19/2019)
• Purple Heart Priority Processing (effective 02/26/2019)
• Blue Water Navy
Updating the VA Schedule for Rating Disabilities

• VA is updating the **15 body systems of the VA Schedule for Rating Disabilities (VASRD)** to modernize and improve the delivery of benefits to Veterans:

  - **Completed:**
    - Dental & Oral
    - Endocrine
    - Gynecological & Breast
    - Eye
    - Skin
    - Hematologic & lymphatic
    - Infectious Diseases

  - **Pending:**
    - Genitourinary
    - Respiratory/ENT & Auditory
    - Neurological
    - Cardio (proposed published)
    - Digestive
    - Mental
    - Musculoskeletal

• The updates will better reflect modern medicine, clarify rating criteria, help VA claims processors make more consistent decisions with greater ease, and ensure greater understanding of VA decisions
The **Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act** took effect on February 19, 2019.

- It creates a new, streamlined decision review process, which features three lanes:
  - **Higher-Level Review Lane** – An entirely new review of the claim by an experienced adjudicator
  - **Supplemental Claim Lane** – An opportunity to submit additional evidence
  - **Appeal Lane** – Review by the Board of Veterans’ Appeals

- The Appeals Management Office’s (AMO) Decision Review Operations Centers (DROCs) have processed the intake of over **111,539** AMA claims since February 19, 2019
One of the most significant changes to the Post-9/11 GI Bill since its inception

Notable changes in the bill’s 34 sections include:

- Provides 200+ additional Term FTE spread over FY18 (157) and FY19 (50)
- Makes the Post 9/11 GI Bill a lifetime benefit – does away with 15-year limit
- Restores GI Bill entitlement and provides relief to those affected by school closures
- Provides full Post 9/11-GI Bill benefits to Purple Heart recipients
- Includes Fry Scholarship into the Yellow Ribbon Program
- Expands eligibility for National Guard and Reserve
- Establishes a STEM Scholarship Program
- Makes changes to the transferability to spouses or children upon death of originally designated dependent

Since passage, VA has notified over 12,500 Veterans affected by school closures and restored almost 16,400 months of entitlement so they can get back to school

Over 1,000 area career and technical schools are now approved to offer an independent study program to Post-9/11 GI Bill beneficiaries, and VA has implemented 27 GI Bill related provisions
Questions