

# Seattle Regional Office

September 2019

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**VA**



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

# 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*

PROGRESS



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



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

PROGRESS



Applying financial management best practices to execute our budget.



*Foster a culture of collaboration*

PROGRESS



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.



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# VBA Beneficiaries Served & Dollars Paid in FY2019 Q2



Insurance



Education



Compensation



Vocational  
Rehabilitation  
and Employment



Transition  
and Economic  
Development



Pension and  
Fiduciary



Home Loan  
Guaranty



*"To care for him who shall  
have borne the battle and  
for his widow, and his orphan."*

*A. Lincoln*

## 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

# Seattle Overview

*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.*



**758** Employees

**55%** Veterans

**VSC**  
**VR&E**

**DRAS**  
**DROC**



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# VBA Accomplishments

INITIATIVE	RESULT
<p><b>JULY 4<sup>TH</sup> CHALLENGE</b> encouraged claims processors to complete 255,000 claims from May 6, 2019 through June 30, 2019. This is a 20% increase.</p>	<p><b>COMPLETE!</b> Claims processors were able to complete the challenge. As a result, they were given the 5<sup>th</sup> of July as a holiday.</p>
<p><b>TELE_COUNSELING</b> provides Veterans the opportunity to meet with their Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors virtually.</p>	<p><b>COMPLETE!</b> Veterans are able to reduce the need for travel. Appointments with beneficiaries average over 1,000 per month.</p>
<p><b>LABOR DAY CHALLENGE</b> invited Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors to develop 6,945 New Plans from July 8, 2019 through August 24, 2019. This is a 20% increase.</p>	<p><b>COMPLETE!</b> Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors were able to complete the challenge nationwide. As a result, they were given the Friday, August 30, 2019 as a holiday.</p>
<p><b>TIMLINESS OF CLAIMS PROGRESS</b> to provide Veterans with accurate and timely service.</p>	<p>The FY19 Quarter 2 shows the average days to complete is 127.8 days, just 2.8 days above the 125 day target.</p>
<p><b>HOMELoAN GUARANTEES</b> to protect lenders from loss if the borrower fails to repay the loan.</p>	<p>31K Veterans were able to avoid foreclosure in FY19 Q2. Specially adapted house assistive technology grants totaling 800K were awarded in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter as well.</p>



# VBA Accomplishments

INITIATIVE	RESULT
<p><b>PAPER EXTRACTION</b> digitized inactive paper claims to reduce processing time and save money previously budgeted for storage.</p>	<p><b>COMPLETE!</b> VBA removed nearly <b>8 million</b> files across nearly <b>58</b> locations, improving processing time, reducing our physical footprint and saving taxpayer dollars.</p>
<p><b>CENTRALIZED INTAKE</b> centralizes and digitizes all claims, further streamlining our processes and creating a fully digital operating environment where claims may be processed and delivered electronically.</p>	<p>Scanned over <b>4.57B IMAGES</b> since inception, and reduced the average mail processing time for Regional Offices (ROs) to <b>2.8 CALENDAR DAYS</b> from a peak of 55 business days in the beginning of 2015.</p>
<p><b>AUTO-ESTABLISHMENT OF CLAIMS</b> populates data from scanned images to establish new claims for Veterans; zero VA staff data entry.</p>	<p>Over <b>84K CLAIMS</b> have been auto-established since inception in May 2017. Has the potential to decrease claim processing time by <b>UP TO 5 DAYS</b> while also decreasing error rates through automation.</p>
<p><b>NATIONAL WORK QUEUE</b> prioritizes and distributes workload across the nation based on VBA workforce's real-time capacity.</p>	<p>The average days to complete a Veteran's claim is <b>108 DAYS</b> FYTD. Now processing Pension claims and managing new appeals work in the NWQ.</p>
<p><b>CENTRALIZED BENEFITS COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT</b> centralizes all printing and mailing, which all 56 regional offices previously did individually, to improve productivity and streamline correspondence with Veterans on their claims.</p>	<p>Over <b>12.6M</b> letters have been generated, resulting in <b>SAVINGS OF APPROX. \$3.5M</b> in postage costs.</p>



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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



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# 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**





# VASRD Update

## 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



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# 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





# Forever GI Bill Implementation

## 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**



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# Questions



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