

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 3, 2014

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

Dear Secretary McDonald,

I write to you today to respectfully request that a new permanent director be assigned to the Reno Department of Veterans Affairs Regional Office (VARO). As a member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, I believe new leadership at this facility is critical to ensuring the disability claims backlog is eliminated so that Nevada veterans receive their earned benefits in a timely manner.

For more than a year, the Reno VARO has remained one of the worst VAROs in the nation and currently has the highest percentage of backlogged claims. The concerns I raised in committee hearings and letters to the VA about the Reno VARO were further confirmed after the VA's Office of Inspector General released a report on this VARO in June 2014, concluding that problems have persisted due to poor management. Immediately after this report was released, I called for the director of the VARO to resign or be removed by the VA. Nevada's veterans should never be forced to wait for their disability benefits due to management's bad decisions.

To date, the Reno VARO has had an acting director since July 2014. Temporary assignments such as this are typically authorized for 120 days and must receive the Secretary's approval for anything beyond this time period. Given this VARO and its employees have faced significant problems with management, I believe it is time for a new permanent director to be assigned to the Reno VARO and respectfully request the VA act expeditiously on this appointment. Furthermore, I request clarification as to why, for months, a new permanent director has not been assigned. The employees and the veterans served by the VARO deserve a director who has been well-vetted and is prepared to bring renewed commitment and focus to addressing Nevada's claims backlog.

As Co-Chair of the Senate VA Backlog Working Group, the claims backlog is an issue I remain committed to addressing for Nevada and our nation's veterans. Again, I thank you for the opportunity to contact you today and respectfully ask that you respond by December 17, 2014.

Sincerely,



DEAN HELLER
U.S. Senator