

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 21, 2013

Mr. Willie Clark, Director  
United States Department of Veterans Affairs  
Western Area Office  
3333 North Central Avenue, Suite 3026  
Phoenix, AZ 85012-2402

Dear Director Clark,

I write to you today in regards to the more than 10,000 pending veterans claims in my home state of Nevada. I appreciate the opportunity to contact you about this important issue.

For the last six years as a Member of Congress, I have been closely following the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) claims backlog issue. I have asked on multiple occasions whether this issue can be solved if more resources are provided to the VA. I have been consistently told in response by your agency that such additional resources are unnecessary.

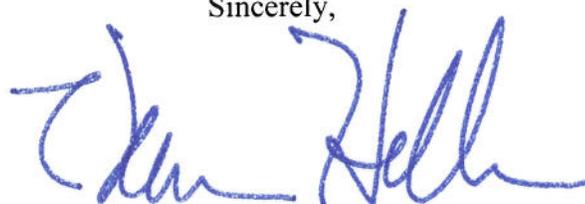
It has come to my attention through a congressional staff briefing given by the Director of the Salt Lake City VA Regional Office that there is a sizeable difference in staffing among several VA Regional Offices for processing VA claims for service-connected disabilities. I have also learned that these staffing plans are disproportionate to the number of claims pending. Such disproportionate staffing results in a significant backlog of claims for high-volume, low-staffed offices, like the one located in my home state of Nevada.

I respectfully request that you answer the following questions:

1. How are full staffing levels determined at the VA Regional Offices?
2. If staffing levels are based upon need and the "Number of Backlogged Claims/Per Service Center/Per Full Time Employee" is considered when determining allocation of resources, then why does each employee at the Reno VA Regional Office have between 200 and 600 percent more claims to handle than other service centers?
3. What can be done to assist valued VA employees at the Reno VA Regional Office so that claims do not take two years or more to process?

I appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to working with you to address the VA's claims backlog. Please assist me in this endeavor by responding to this letter by April 15, 2013.

Sincerely,



DEAN HELLER  
U.S. Senator