

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

April 17, 2013

The Honorable Allison A. Hickey
Under Secretary for Benefits
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Mr. Edward Russell, Director
Department of Veterans Affairs
Reno Regional Office
5460 Reno Corporate Drive
Reno, NV 89511

Dear Under Secretary Hickey and Director Russell:

We write to you today regarding the high number of backlogged claims in the Reno VA Regional Office (VARO). We appreciate the opportunity to contact you about this important issue that is critical to Nevada's veterans.

There are currently 10,000 pending claims and more than 8,000 backlogged claims at the Reno VARO still awaiting an answer. According to the Center for Investigative Reporting, 4,210 Nevada veterans have waited more than a year for an answer. On average, the wait time is 479 days, and the average wait time for veterans filling for their first time is 681 days. This is significantly longer than the national average and is unacceptable for veterans in Las Vegas, Reno, and across the State of Nevada who are relying on the Reno VARO to adjudicate these claims in a timely manner.

We recognize there are multiple factors contributing to the number of veterans' claims entering the system, including the addition of presumptive diseases associated with Agent Orange and the drawdown of forces in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, addressing the claims backlog must be a priority regardless of these factors.

We respectfully request that you provide us with your recommendations for what the Reno VARO needs from the Nevada Congressional delegation to assist in reducing this unacceptable backlog. It is our combined goal to see this backlog eradicated as quickly as possible so Nevada veterans can receive the compensation and benefits they have earned in service to our nation.

In the interest of ensuring America's brave heroes are taken care of, we are committed to working with the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Reno VARO as you undertake this endeavor. Thank you for your attention to this matter, and we look forward to hearing from you on how to be helpful in addressing the Reno VARO's claims backlog.

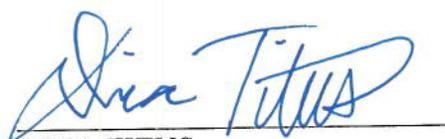
Sincerely,



DEAN HELLER
U.S. Senator



HARRY REID
U.S. Senator



DINA TITUS
U.S. Representative



JOE HECK
U.S. Representative



STEVEN HORSFORD
U.S. Representative