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VA Makes Gains in Faster Disability Claims Processing

Backlog Reduced 67 Percent Under New Automation and Process Improvements

Washington – The federal initiative to provide timely decisions on disability payments to Veterans has crossed a major milestone in its final sprint to eliminate the backlog of Veterans' benefits claims.

The major transformation effort to apply new technology and process solutions has paid off at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). It reduced its inventory of backlogged claims from a high of 611,000 claims in March of 2013 to fewer than 200,000 this week, while at the same time improving decision quality.

"Make no mistake, we're not slowing down short of the finish line," said Under Secretary for Benefits Allison Hickey. "Our goal is to eliminate the claims backlog by the end of 2015 – meaning all Veterans will receive timely and accurate decisions on their disability claims."

Hickey credited a combination of factors for the 67-percent drop in backlog: first, the extra hours of work put in by dedicated benefits claims processors across the nation, who have worked evenings, Saturdays and Sundays to drive the backlog down; as well as procedural efficiencies backed by powerful automation tools and paperless claims processing. In addition, she cited the transformation of Veterans Benefits Administration's training and quality assurance programs resulting in steady increases in the accuracy of decisions.

Just a few years ago, claims processors handled 5,000 tons of paper annually, an amount equivalent to 200 Empire State Buildings. In less than two years, VA converted claims processing to a 21st Century digital environment where claims for VA benefits and services can be submitted and processed, and benefits delivered, online.

Veterans increasingly are filing claims electronically from the start at https://www.ebenefits.va.gov. Veterans can submit their applications online, upload their supporting documentation, and check the status of their claim through a multi-channel Web portal boasting nearly 60 self-service features.

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