

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 15, 2013

**VA Mandates Overtime to Increase Production of** **Compensation Claims Decisions**

*Latest Initia*tive *aimed at reducing the backlog*

WASHINGTON – As part of its ongoing effort to accelerate the elimination of the disability compensation claims backlog, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is announcing today that it is mandating overtime for claims processors in its 56 regional benefits offices. This surge, which will be implemented through the end of fiscal year 2013, will be targeted to eliminating the backlogged status of claims. The additional overtime hours that will be worked during this period will be used to help eliminate the backlog with continued emphasis on high-priority claims for homeless Veterans and those claiming financial hardship, the terminally ill, former Prisoners of War, Medal of Honor recipients, and Veterans filing Fully Developed Claims.

 “VA is dedicated to providing Veterans with the care and benefits they have earned and deserve,” said VA Secretary Eric K. Shinseki. “This increased overtime initiative will provide more Veterans with decisions on their claims and will help us achieve our goal of eliminating the claims backlog.”

This is the latest effort in support of the Secretary’s plan to reduce the backlog. Last month, the VA announced an initiative to expedite compensation claims decisions for Veterans who have waited one year or longer. On April 19, VA began prioritizing claims decisions for Veterans who have been waiting the longest, by providing provisional decisions that allow eligible Veterans to begin collecting compensation benefits quickly. With a provisional decision, a Veteran has a year to submit additional information to support a claim before the decision becomes final. More information can be found [here](http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=2436).

 “We’re committed to getting Veterans decisions on their claims as quickly and accurately as possible,” said Undersecretary for Benefits Allison A. Hickey. “We need to surge our resources now to help those who have waited the longest and end the backlog.”

Claims for Wounded Warriors separating from the military for medical reasons will continue to be handled separately and on a priority basis with the Department of Defense through the Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES). On average, Wounded Warriors separating through IDES currently receive VA compensation benefits in 2 months following their separation from service.

Veterans can learn more about disability benefits on the joint Department of Defense—VA web portal eBenefits at <http://www.ebenefits.va.gov>.

More information about filing Fully Developed Claims is available at: <http://www.benefits.va.gov/transformation/fastclaims/>.