

VA



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VA's Appeals Modernization Act takes effect today

New law streamlines department's current claims and appeals process for Veterans

WASHINGTON — Today the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced that it has implemented the [Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017](#), which was signed into law Aug. 23, 2017, and represents one of the most significant statutory changes to benefit Veterans in decades.

“This is a historic day for VA, its stakeholders and, most importantly, for Veterans and their families,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “The implementation of the Appeals Modernization Act comes as a direct result of collaboration among VA, Congress and Veteran Service Organizations to deliver on Veterans’ longstanding desire for reform of the legacy appeals system. Beginning today, Veterans will have greater choice in how VA reviews their disagreement with a VA claims decision and enjoy timely resolutions of disagreements through a streamlined process.”

Effective today, Veterans who appeal a VA claims decision have three decision review options:

Higher-Level Review, Supplemental Claim and Appeal to the Board of Veterans’ Appeals.

- In the Higher-Level Review option, a more experienced adjudicator will conduct a new review of the previous decision.
- Veterans who select the Supplemental Claim option may submit new and relevant evidence, and VA will assist in developing new evidence under its duty to assist.
- If Veterans appeal a decision to the Board, they can choose one of three dockets: direct review, evidence or hearing.

VA’s goal is to complete Supplemental Claims and Higher-Level Reviews in an average of 125 days, and decisions appealed to the Board for direct review in an average of 365 days. Under the legacy process, decisions averaged three to seven years.

VA remains committed to reducing significantly the inventory of legacy appeals. VA’s fiscal year 2019 budget included funding for 605 additional appeals employees, which VA used to establish two new Decision Review Operations Centers at the St. Petersburg, Florida, and Seattle, Washington, regional offices. The former Appeals Resource Center in Washington, D.C., was converted to a third Decision Review Operations Center.

For more than 18 months, VA has worked toward full implementation of the Appeals Modernization Act, but reform has been a goal for VA and its stakeholders for years. In March 2016, VA sponsored an “Appeals Summit” in which VA, Veterans Service Organizations, Veterans advocates and Congress worked together to design a new appeals system. The summit resulted in the drafting, passage and implementation of the Appeals Modernization Act.

For more information on Appeals Modernization, visit <http://www.va.gov/decision-reviews>.

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