



(April 20, 2016)

In order to further improve the lines of communication and to respond to the concerns between the National VA Council and you our members, I have established a National VA Council Briefing. This NVAC Briefing will bring you the latest news and developments within DVA and provide you with the current status of issues this Council is currently addressing. I believe that this NVAC Briefing will greatly enhance the way in which we communicate and the way in which we share new information, keeping you better informed.

Alma L. Lee

National VA Council, President

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**In This Briefing:** [Review of VBA's Alleged Inappropriate Prioritization of Appeals at VARO Roanoke, VA](#)

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[Review of VBA's Alleged Inappropriate Prioritization of Appeals at VARO Roanoke, VA](#)

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The Office of Inspector General (OIG) received an anonymous allegation that staff at the Roanoke VA Regional Office (VARO) were prioritizing the processing of newer appeals before older appeals, resulting in thousands of incomplete appeals dating back from 2010 to 2013. We

substantiated the allegation that Roanoke VARO appeals staff focused on completing newer appeals instead of processing older appeals. As of June 4, 2015, Roanoke VARO had 12,890 appeals pending at various stages of the appeals process, of which 3,350 dated back from October 2008 through FY 2013. We interviewed 14 of Roanoke's 23 appeals staff and 13 of them stated they primarily focused their FY 2014 efforts on working the newer appeals with fewer issues. Another indicator that Roanoke VARO appeals staff focused on completing newer appeals was the number of completed appeals that were less than a year old. At the Roanoke VARO, the number of appeals completed in less than a year increased by 16 percent, from 66 percent in FY 2013 to 82 percent of the appeals completed in FY 2014. This compared to an increase of 1 percent at the Atlanta VARO, 2 percent at the St. Petersburg VARO, and 4 percent at the Winston-Salem VARO. This occurred because Roanoke VARO leadership did not follow workload management plans, which required that appeals staff prioritize their work based on the appeals with the longest days pending. Instead, as directed by the Southern Area Office Director to reduce appeals inventory, the Roanoke VARO's management implemented a Notice of Disagreement reduction plan that focused on processing less complex, newly initiated appeals. We recommended that the Roanoke VARO Director ensure that leadership and appeals staff follow the workload management plan to prioritize work based on the appeals pending the longest. The Roanoke VARO Director concurred with our finding and recommendation. Based on actions already implemented, we considered the recommendation closed.