



(October 16, 2015)

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: Statement from VBA Under Secretary Hickey

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VBA Team Members, VA Team Members and Partners,

Over the last four and a half years, I have sent you many a note acknowledging all the extraordinary efforts and results you have driven to significantly improve our delivery of benefits and services to our over 12 million Veterans, Servicemembers, their families and Survivors. In every one of these notes, there was also an ask, a call to action, for the next level of service we can and should provide.

This note--**my last to you**--is no different.

I asked you all four years ago to embark on a seemingly impossible mission, knowing from my early and continued conversations with you that you were "All In!" -- so willing, able and ready to transform VBA in scope and scale never achieved before in our history. You committed your heart and soul in such phenomenally dedicated ways. I am proud today to acknowledge that together, we have changed how we serve Veterans for all time -- and we are not done yet. There is still more to do!

As a direct result of a Transformation Plan we developed together and implemented together -- we have eliminated a decades old backlog **by nearly 90 percent**, reducing it from 611,000 to just over 70,000 today -- and increased our accuracy at the claim level by 8 percent to 91 percent, to 96 percent at the issue level, and to over 98 percent in 7 of the 8 error categories -- with the last

one at 97.7 percent. We have now completed 1.4 million claims and over 6.3 million medical issues in just the last year -- the highest in our history of VA -- increasing our productivity by over 81 percent! Year over year, you have exceeded the previous years' service to Veterans across all of our business lines -- Compensation, Pension, Fiduciary, Home Loans, Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment, Insurance, Benefits Assistance and Outreach, and Transition And Employment Services, Public Contact, Call Centers. You have leveraged the enabling support of our Support Services, IT, General Counsel, Public Affairs, Legislative Affairs, Strategic Planning, Communications, HR, Finance, VHA C&P exams, Contractors, PMO offices, MyVA, Labor Partners, ISOs, VSOs at the National, State and County levels, and other Veteran Advocates to achieve this record-breaking level of service.

With this combined effort, Veterans now wait on average 92 days for a high quality decision and fiscal year to date, their claims have taken 127 days on average to complete. **This is the lowest ADP and ADC in the 21st Century!**

We no longer touch 5000 tons of paper in a single year. **We now complete 99.9 percent of all Veterans claims in our newly transformed digital environment.** We did this all in a record-breaking 2 years -- something not done before at this magnitude in the Federal Government and not easily matched even in the commercial business environment. You have made history across both Federal and Commercial space in your "All In" efforts to achieve this transformation for our Veterans, their families and Survivors. The technology you have built, tested, and deployed has been instrumental in this accomplishment, but the real success belongs to the people who built and use it every day to make such a big difference in our Veterans' experience.

But we aren't done yet. There is more to do, and that will take new, fresh thinking and energy from your next leader in VBA as my mission with you comes to a close. My heart and spirit will remain with you as you continue your efforts. I am so very proud of each and every one of you.

I came here as a calling to transform VBA and to help so many Veterans, Service Members, their families and Survivors. My heart and passion will always be focused on that aim. After 4.5 years of this blessed honor, it is time to serve others and you in a different way.

There has never been a job I have been blessed to do that was so **rich with purpose**; no customer **so honored to serve**; no team **so amazing to work alongside** as this noble mission. Together, we have made such a big difference to many millions of those who have borne the battle. We have many more to care for as well -- so continue your "all in" efforts! (That is the ask! Remember: Integrity, Quality, Grant if you can -- deny only if you must!)

I throw to each of you -- the virtual "starfish" for making such an amazing difference to so many...and to this one. I look forward to seeing how you take it to the next level.

So Very Proud to Be Your Under Secretary

Allison

The starfish story:

While walking along a beach, an elderly gentleman saw someone in the distance leaning down, picking something up and throwing it into the ocean. As he got closer, he noticed that the figure was that of a young woman, picking up starfish one by one and tossing each one gently back into the water.

The Old man smiled and said, "I must ask, why are you throwing starfish in to the ocean?" To this, the young woman replied, "The sun is up and the tide is going out. If I don't throw them in, they will die." Upon hearing this, the elderly observer commented, "But young man, do you not realize that there are miles and miles of beach and there are starfish all along every mile? You can't possibly make a difference!"

The young man listened politely. Then he bent down, picked up another starfish, threw it back into the ocean past the breaking waves and said, "I made a difference for that one."

Allison A. Hickey