

ROGER WILLIAMS
25TH DISTRICT, TEXAS

COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET

COMMITTEE ON
TRANSPORTATION AND
INFRASTRUCTURE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON AVIATION

SUBCOMMITTEE ON RAILROADS, PIPELINES,
AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
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May 10, 2013

The Honorable Eric K. Shinseki
Secretary, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20420

Dear Secretary Shinseki:

We, the undersigned members of the Texas delegation, write to express our concern over recent reports that the former director of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Waco regional office (VARO) received more than \$53,000 in performance bonuses while the average wait time for veterans who file a claim there averages 440 days, or 150 days longer than the national average. The inefficiencies and inaccuracies in processing benefits claims in the VA's Waco and Houston VARO offices has reached a critical tipping point. This backlog is a crisis that may worsen over time as more men and women begin to return home from Iraq and Afghanistan.

In 2009, the average claim took an average of 161 days for the VA to make an initial rating decision. It now takes more than 286 days. With over 1 million veterans currently waiting for claims to be processed nationwide, the Waco office for example has approximately 43,000 currently pending. While the number of pending claims has begun to decrease, the average wait time has risen. At this current rate, the current plan to end the compensation claim backlog by 2015 seems unattainable.

While we applaud your agency's decision to withhold executive bonuses in 2013 and invest those funds in reducing the backlog, we respectfully request that your agency produce an action plan within the next 30 days that will specify how the backlog nationwide will be eliminated, let alone in the Waco and Houston VARO offices. The VA backlog is unacceptable and a disservice to all of the men and women who have admirably served our country.

We thank you in advance for honoring our request and look forward to working with you to help your agency improve its service to our veterans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Roger Williams".

ROGER WILLIAMS
Member of Congress