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August 7, 2014

Mr. Robert A. McDonald  
Secretary of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20420-0001

Dear Secretary McDonald:

I am writing to you on behalf of my constituents, regarding complications within the eBenefits portal used by Veterans to access, manage, and apply for their benefits. A growing number of Veterans have reported extreme difficulties when applying for dependency benefits to include:

1. Being unable to upload supporting documents, i.e., marriage certificates, birth certificates, school attendance reports.
2. Being instructed (in Step 3) that no supporting documents are needed to fulfill the dependency claim.
3. Receiving a "successful claim completion" message without providing the above referenced supporting documents, only for it to be rejected in the system immediately without any notification to the Veteran.

My concern is that Veterans believe, once they complete their dependency claims in a manner as instructed on eBenefits, that they have filed a "successful claim". I have a growing concern that this may not be the case, and that these claims are actually suffering a digital demise. Please clarify whether the eBenefits portal is experiencing any glitches leading to incomplete claims or false denials. I ask that you also address the time frame for any malfunctions attributed to eBenefits, the number of claims affected, and steps being taken to correct the software.

It has also been brought to my attention that paper dependency claims and Freedom of Information Act requests are taking an estimated 18-24 months at the Little Rock Regional Office. Veterans in some cases are having their claims decided without ever being afforded their records for review. Please inform what procedures are being administered to battle the growing back log in these kinds of claims.

Thank you in advance for your assistance. I look forward to receiving your reply in my Washington D.C. office which is located at 1711 Longworth HOB, Washington, D.C. 20515.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rick Crawford". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "R" and "C".

Rick Crawford  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

RC/MT