

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2803

August 22, 2018

The Honorable Robert Wilkie
Secretary of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Wilkie:

I write to express serious concern regarding the recently issued Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Office of Inspector General (OIG) report, *Unwarranted Medical Reexaminations for Disability Benefits*, which found that disabled veterans were unnecessarily required to undergo reexaminations to continue receiving the benefits they had earned in the service of our country. Such actions wasted veterans' time and taxpayers' dollars and diverted critical VA resources from caring for veterans.

Of the more than 50,000 reexaminations that took place during the period the OIG report reviewed, thirty-seven percent were deemed unwarranted. In many cases, this was a direct result of VA ignoring its own departmental policies. Current policy at the Veterans Benefit Administration (VBA) requires that a veteran's claim folder be reviewed before seeking reexamination. However, the OIG report estimated that of the 19,800 veterans who had to go through the burden of unnecessary tests, 15,500 – seventy-eight percent – did not even have a pre-exam review, and 14,200 veterans experienced “no change to their disability evaluations because of their reexamination.”

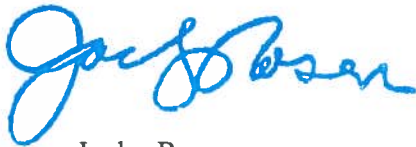
The veterans forced to go through needless reexaminations should have qualified for exclusion for a number of reasons, from having a “permanent disability that was unlikely to improve” to individuals whose claims folders already “contained updated medical evidence” to warrant continued disability evaluation without need for reexamination. Nonetheless, VBA required thousands of these veterans to show up for appointments, undergo tests, and wait with uncertainty about whether or not their benefits would continue.

Unnecessary reexaminations are both costly and burdensome, both to the veterans involved and taxpayers. The OIG report found that, “While reexaminations are important in the appropriate situation to ensure taxpayer dollars are appropriately spent, unwarranted reexaminations cause undue hardship for veterans. They also generate excessive work, resulting in significant costs and the diversion of VA personnel from veteran care and services.” These costs are estimated to have totaled over ten million dollars in taxpayer money spent on unwarranted reexaminations in just a six-month period.

I therefore strongly urge you to work with the Under Secretary for Benefits to implement the Inspector General's recommendations and immediately correct this wrong which has burdened our country's disabled veterans and taxpayers. I also request that you report to Congress within 30 days with your plan to implement OIG's recommendations and ensure that this never happens again.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to continuing to work with VA on improving care for veterans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jacky Rosen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jacky" being more prominent than the last name "Rosen".

Jacky Rosen
Member of Congress