



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Office of Government Relations
Congressional Liaison Service

Casework Guide

“...to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan...”

Abraham Lincoln



Table of Contents

Page 3

Introduction

Congressional Liaison Service Locations & Contact Information

Page 4

VA's Congressional Liaison Service is Here to Help Your Office

Page 5

Veteran Issues Not Administered By the Department of Veterans Affairs

Page 6

Written Inquiries

- How Written Casework Inquiries Are Processed
- How to Prevent Unnecessary Delays

Page 7

Telephonic Inquiries

- How Telephonic Casework Inquiries Are Processed
- Response Time
- How to Prevent Unnecessary Delays

Page 8

Additional Resources



Introduction

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) maintains a presence on Capitol Hill to provide a convenient on-site location where Members can obtain assistance on casework and other VA-related issues for their Veteran constituency. The Congressional Liaison Service (CLS) offices are located in the Russell Senate Office Building and the Rayburn House Office Building.

The Senate Liaison Service was commissioned by Congress on December 10, 1922 and the House Liaison Service was commissioned on February 13, 1925. These offices were brought under the jurisdiction of the Department of Veterans Affairs in 1930 and remain so today.

We hope that you will find this Guide helpful. The goal of the CLS is to provide your office with prompt, efficient, and professional service and I invite you to contact us whenever you can use our assistance.

Congressional Liaison Service Office Contact Information

Director: Annmarie Amaral

Hours of Operation:

Monday - Friday

8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Senate Office:

VA Congressional Liaison Service
Room 189
Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Phone: (202) 224-5351
Fax: (202) 273-9988
E-mail: OCLA-CLS@va.gov

House Office:

VA Congressional Liaison Service
Room 2026
Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Phone: (202) 225-2280
Fax: (202) 273-9988
E-mail: OCLA-CLS@va.gov

Liaisons

Rick Armstrong
Jeremy Dillard
Geisela Wimberly
Alma Bourne



VA's Congressional Liaison Service is Here to Help Your Office

VA's Congressional Liaison Service (CLS) offers assistance on a wide range of issues important to your constituents to include:

- Compensation and pension benefits
- Survivor benefits
- Medical treatment for Veterans and dependents
- Life insurance benefits
- Educational benefits
- Vocational rehabilitation and employment benefits
- Burial and death benefits
- Headstone and memorial marker applications
- Presidential Memorial Certificates
- VA forms and publications
- Locating Veterans
- Doing business with VA
- Purchasing a home or VA-acquired property
- VA employee questions regarding employment
- VA policies, regulations, and legislation
- Statistical data concerning Veterans, VA programs, and expenditures
- Briefings - CLS team members can brief caseworkers on services available through our office as well as on certain programs and benefits administered by our agency.



Veteran Issues Not Administered By the Department of Veterans Affairs

Veteran Related Issue	Responsible Agency
Arlington National Cemetery	<i>Department of the Army</i>
Combat-Related Special Compensation	<i>Department of Defense (Branch of Service)</i>
Concurrent Receipt	<i>Department of Defense - Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS)</i>
Discharge upgrade	<i>Department of Defense (Branch of Service)</i>
Employment and Training	<i>Department of Labor - Veterans' Employment & Training Service (VETS)</i>
Military medals Military records Military discharge documents (DD-214)	<i>National Personnel Records Center (NPRC)</i> Online access: http://vetrecs.archives.gov/
Small Business Loans	<i>Small Business Administration</i>
Survivors' Benefits Program	<i>Department of Defense</i>
TriCare	<i>Department of Defense</i>
Veterans Preference	<i>Office of Personnel Management (OPM)</i>
Vietnam Memorial Wall	<i>Department of Defense: Compiles the casualty list</i> <i>National Park Service: Maintains the Wall</i>
Records destroyed in the 1973 fire at the National Personnel Records Center	<i>National Personnel Records Center</i>

Veteran Service Organizations:

For a listing of Veteran Organizations please visit: <http://www1.va.gov/vso/index.cfm>

This directory is published annually and lists Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs) as well as State, Commonwealth, and Territorial Directors of Veterans Affairs.



Written Inquiries

How Written Casework Inquiries Are Processed:

1. Letters can be faxed, mailed, or e-mailed to the CLS.

Please note – All correspondence sent by traditional mail is subject to security screening and the decontamination process which will delay receipt. Please fax all inquiries requiring immediate attention.

2. CLS sends the Member office a letter acknowledging receipt of the inquiry.
3. CLS assigns the inquiry to the appropriate VA office to obtain the response.
4. The assigned office's response is directed to the Member or the constituent if requested by the caseworker and when deemed appropriate.
5. VA retains a copy of the response for record.

How to Prevent Unnecessary Delays:

1. Make certain that all names on the correspondence are legible.
2. Confirm that all enclosures referred to in the letter are included. If enclosures are not included, it's helpful to provide an explanation as to why they are not.
3. Include a privacy release from the Veteran authorizing access to and release of information from his/her VA file. The privacy release will authorize VA to give information to the Member. VA will not release information to a third party (spouse, family member, friend, etc.) without the expressed consent of the Veteran.
4. Entitlement to VA benefits is based on the Veteran's service and the VA file is established under the Veteran's name. Therefore, any related correspondence should include the following information:
 - a. The Veteran's full name
 - b. The Veteran's VA claim number or Social Security number
 - c. The name of the VA medical center where treatment has been provided, when appropriate
 - d. The Dependent's name, when appropriate
 - e. When the Veteran's VA claim number or Social Security number is not available, other pertinent information should be provided, such as date of birth, date of death, dates of military service, branch of service, military service number.



Telephonic Inquiries

How Telephonic Casework Inquiries Are Processed:

1. A Congressional Liaison Representative (CLR) will work with the caseworker to obtain all necessary information in order to best respond to the inquiry.
2. The CLR will take the necessary steps to obtain the most complete and accurate response as quickly as possible for the caseworker.

Response time:

1. Whenever possible, the CLR will provide an immediate response.
2. Further research is often necessary when dealing with complex inquiries. In these situations the CLR will attempt to provide an educated approximation of when the caseworker can expect the response.
3. CLS is always available to discuss an inquiry and/or the status of a response to an inquiry with Congressional caseworkers.
4. If the CLR who managed the inquiry anticipates a response may take longer than originally estimated they will attempt to contact the caseworker to provide the status of the inquiry and an updated estimate for the response.

How to Prevent Unnecessary Delays:

Entitlement to VA benefits is based on the Veteran's service and the VA file is established under the Veteran's name. Caseworkers should have the following information available when calling for assistance:

1. The Veteran's full name
2. The Veteran's VA claim number or Social Security number
3. The name of the VA medical center where treatment has been provided, when appropriate
4. The Dependent's name, when appropriate
5. When the Veteran's VA claim number or Social Security number is not available, other pertinent information should be provided, such as date of birth, date of death, dates of military service, branch of service, military service number.
6. If the caseworker contacts CLS regarding a case with which he/she has been in contact with another VA office, please provide the name of the previous VA point of contact, and which office or department they work in.



Additional Resources:

Veterans Crisis Line: 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1

The VA Web Site: We encourage all Congressional staff to explore www.VA.gov. Our website contains a wealth of information about programs and benefits administered by the Department. It also offers the convenience of applying for many benefits through the use of on-line applications. In addition to VA services and programs, the VA website also contains links to [other federal](#) and [state agencies](#) that administer benefits for Veterans and their dependents.

VA Congressional Notifications: To receive updates on VA issues please visit <https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USVAOCLA/subscriber/new> to subscribe to VA's Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs Congressional notifications.

Health Care Eligibility: Veterans of recent conflicts are eligible for 5 years of healthcare from VA - regardless of the status of any disability claim submitted. For more information: http://www.va.gov/healthbenefits/apply/returning_servicemembers.asp

VA Transformation to Digital Claims Process: Veterans can now use *eBenefits*, a joint VA-DoD client services portal with over 55 self-service options, to file benefit claims online in an easy-to-use, prompt-based system. Veterans can also upload supporting claims information that feeds into VA's paperless claims processing system; check the status of claims or appeals; review their VA payment history; and obtain military documents, among other actions. For more information: www.eBenefits.VA.gov

Fully Developed Claims: Fully developed claims offer Veterans and survivors faster decisions on disability compensation, pension, and survivor benefit claims. Veterans and survivors submit all of the claim-specific information and evidence needed to substantiate a disability. At the time of applications, claimants certify they have nothing further to give VA regarding the claim, thus eliminating the need for VA to undertake a lengthy search for any missing information or evidence. For more information, please visit: <http://www.benefits.va.gov/fdc/>

Workload and Performance Reports: You can view the current inventory of claims, backlog, and other workload measures for both the national level and at the regional office level by visiting: <http://www.vba.va.gov/reports>

VA's National Cemetery Administration: NCA's **Funeral Director Resource Kit** can be found at: <http://www.cem.va.gov/cem/funeraldirector.asp>

