

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 2, 2013

COMMITTEES:  
ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND  
TRANSPORTATION  
BANKING, HOUSING, AND  
URBAN AFFAIRS  
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING  
VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Mr. Willie Clark, Director  
United States Department of Veterans Affairs  
Western Area Office  
3333 North Central Avenue, Suite 3026  
Phoenix, AZ 85012-2402

Dear Director Clark,

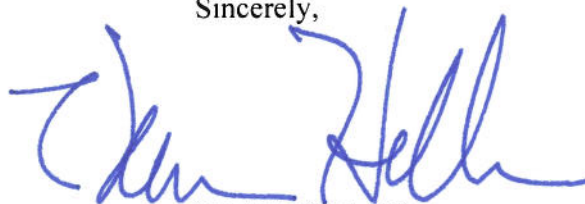
Thank you for your response to my March 21, 2013, inquiry regarding the staffing levels at the Reno Veterans Affairs Regional Office, which processes disability and compensation claims for the State of Nevada. While your letter describes the steps the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is taking to try to transform the benefits delivery system, it failed to answer my original questions.

As stated in my prior correspondence, it has come to my attention through a Congressional staff briefing given by the Director of the Salt Lake City VA Regional Office that there is a sizeable difference in staffing among several VA Regional Offices for processing VA claims for service-connected disabilities. I have also learned that these staffing plans are disproportionate to the number of claims pending. Such disproportionate staffing results in a significant backlog of claims for high-volume, low-staffed offices, like the one located in my home state of Nevada. As a member of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs and an outspoken advocate for providing the VA with the necessary resources to process these claims in a timely manner, I once again respectfully request a detailed response to the questions below:

1. If staffing levels are based upon need and the "Number of Backlogged Claims/Per Service Center/Per Full Time Employee" is considered when determining allocation of resources, then why does each employee at the Reno VA Regional Office have between 200 and 600 percent more claims to handle than other service centers?
2. What can be done to assist valued VA employees at the Reno VA Regional Office so that claims do not take two years or more to process?

My home state of Nevada has over more than 10,000 pending veterans' claims. Understanding whether enough resources have been provided to the Reno VA Regional Office could help thousands of veterans in Nevada. I respectfully request that you provide me the answers to my questions so that I can better assure that Nevada's veterans and our nation's veterans do not have to wait two years to have their claims processed. I remain committed to finding an answer to my questions and believe it to be a reasonable request of your agency. I respectfully request a response be provided to my office by May 10, 2013. I look forward to hearing from you and working with you on how to address the backlog of claims.

Sincerely,



DEAN HELLER  
U.S. Senator