

CONGRESSWOMAN
CHELLIE PINGREE

1ST DISTRICT
MAINE



COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NUTRITION AND HORTICULTURE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CONSERVATION, ENERGY,
AND FORESTRY

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON PERSONNEL
SUBCOMMITTEE ON SEAPOWERS AND
EXPEDITIONARY FORCES

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

June 6, 2012

The Honorable Allison A. Hickey
Under Secretary for Benefits
Department of Veterans Affairs
Washington, DC 20525

Dear General Hickey,

Thank you for your service to the nation's veterans and for your work to transform the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA). Under your leadership, VBA has made several positive changes that I am confident will help reduce the backlog of disability claims. I also want to thank you and Secretary Shinseki for your commitment to ending homelessness among veterans.

I am pleased that VBA expedites a veteran's disability claim once the Department finds out a veteran is homeless. I am concerned, however, that currently none of the benefit application forms ask if the veteran is or is about to become homeless. I know all VBA employees share your dedication to our veterans and I've witnessed firsthand how VBA employees in Maine work tirelessly and expeditiously on behalf of veterans, especially once they know the veteran is homeless. Asking veterans if they are homeless from the onset of the claims process seems like a common sense solution that could help expedite veterans' claims even faster, which in many cases might lead these heroes out of homelessness if claims are awarded.

I am aware VBA is currently reviewing these forms and I would ask that the question of homelessness or pending homelessness be added immediately. I stand ready to help you in this endeavor and appreciate your service to our nation's veterans as well as your many years of Honorable service. I look forward to working with you on this extremely important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chellie Pingree". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress