

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 19, 2012

The Honorable Eric K. Shinseki
Secretary, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Ave.,
Washington, D.C. 20420

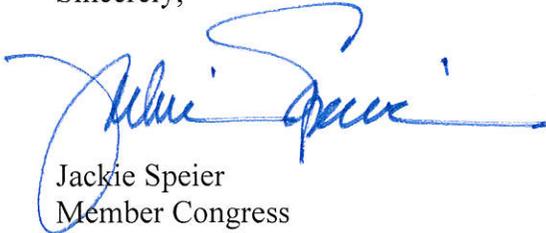
Dear Secretary Shinseki:

We are writing to express our extreme disappointment over the recent decision by your department not to include the Veteran Affairs' Oakland Regional Office among the 12 offices slated to receive "claims transformation initiatives" which will address severe claims backlog issues. The Oakland regional office serves veterans from Bakersfield to the Oregon border, and averages a 313 day wait for a decision on a claim. As of last Monday, the Oakland office has an entitlement backlog of 34,159 cases with 80.8 percent of these cases sitting without a rating for more than 125 days. This is the second worst percentage of backlogged claims older than 125 days in the nation. The Oakland office, crippled by its backlog, is forced to ship all new cases to VA offices in Nebraska and Oklahoma.

We have heard from our veteran constituents that they are often required to obtain multiple medical exams because the first exam is considered invalid due to the lengthy passage of time between the initial claim and the time the claim is ready to be rated. This is gross inefficiency and an unnecessary hardship on veterans and their families, some who may even become homeless while they wait for a claim decision from the Oakland office.

Please reconsider your decision not to select the Oakland regional office as one of the 12 to receive transformation initiatives, and send immediate help to the Oakland office so it may improve its processing of claims, erase this shameful backlog, and serve the veterans who so nobly served our country.

Sincerely,



Jackie Speier
Member Congress



Jerry McNerney
Member of Congress


Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress


John Garamendi
Member of Congress


Dennis Cardoza
Member of Congress


Anna Eshoo
Member of Congress


Pete Stark
Member of Congress


Jim Costa
Member of Congress


Lois Capps
Member of Congress


George Miller
Member of Congress


Doris Matsui
Member of Congress


Mike Honda
Member of Congress


Barbara Lee
Member of Congress


Lynn Woolsey
Member of Congress



Sam Farr
Member of Congress



Mike Thompson
Member of Congress