

# **VETERANS AFFAIRS AND REHABILITATION**

## **WEEKLY UPDATE**

Week Ending — 04/12/2024

### ***Division Operations***

**The American Legion submitted a Statement for Record (SFR) to the House of Veterans Affairs Committee for the April 10<sup>th</sup> hearing on “Pending Legislation”.**

#### **Statement For Record**

<b>LEGISLATION</b>	<b>POSITION</b>
Draft Legislation - Veterans Appeals Efficiency Act of 2024	Support
Draft Legislation - Medical Disability Examination Improvement Act of 2024	Support
Draft Legislation - Veterans Appeals Options Expansion Act of 2024	Support
H.R. 2911 - Fairness for Servicemembers and their Families Act of 2023	Support
Draft Legislation - Prioritizing Veterans’ Survivors Act	Support
Draft Legislation - Toxic Exposures Examination Improvement Act	Support
Draft Legislation - Clear Communication for Veterans Claims Act	Support
Draft Legislation - Veterans Claims Quality Improvement Act of 2024	Support

## *Health Policy Team Operations*

### Meetings:

- April 9: Health Policy Team (HPT) attended the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Partnership Veteran Service Organization Stakeholder Meeting, which discussed services offered by VA chaplains, the importance of mental health for aging and geriatric veterans, and future mental health topics that need to be addressed.
- April 10: HPT attended Caring for All Who Have Borne the Battle: Ensuring Equity for Women Veterans at VA Senate hearing, which discussed the availability of services for women veterans, challenges, and plans for improvement in the VA.
- April 10: HPT attended the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs (DAMA) Legislative Hearing on Pending Legislation which discussed veteran, survivor, and caregiver benefits.
- April 12: HPT virtually attended a meeting with the CEO of Zeel, Mr. Samer Hamadeh. Zeel is an innovative massage therapy company that provides medical massage therapy to patients in their home. This company is an approved community health provider for the VA.

### Legislative Bill Reviews:

- **H.R. X – Firearm Storage Draft Bill - Support**
  - To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a program to furnish to certain veteran's items intended for the secure storage of firearms, and for other purposes.

Supporting Resolutions:

- [Resolution No. 11: Lethal Means and Suicide Prevention](#)

- **H.R. X – Molly R. Loomis Research for Descendants of Toxic Exposed Veterans Act**
  - To require the Interagency Working Group on Toxic Exposure to conduct research on the diagnosis and treatment of health conditions of descendants of individuals exposed to toxic substances while serving as members of the Armed Forces, and for other purposes.

Supporting Resolutions:

- [Resolution No. 118: Environmental Exposures](#)

## ***Claims & Appeals Team Operations***

### **Accreditations**

- Applications received from TAL Departments 11
- Certifications submitted by TAL Washington Office 11
- Certifications approved by VA's Office of General Counsel 10

### **The American Legion Board of Veterans' Appeals (BVA) Unit**

- AMA appeals pending (125+ days) 19
- Informal Hearing Presentations (IHPs) prepared 205
- Memos generated 0
- Phone inquiries 94
- Internal quality reviews 6
- Individual training 5 hours
- Team training 1 hours
- Hearings 1
- Board dispositions 148
  - o Appeals granted 48 (32%)
  - o Remanded 66 (44%)
  - o Denied 29 (4.7%)
  - o Other 7 (4.7%)
- Largest Retro Award Print \$100,244

### **Senior Veterans Disability Claims Specialist**

- Compensation & Pension Claims 14
- Other Issues 0
- Contacts 24

### **Pension & Debt Management**

- New Claims 25
- Supporting Submissions 29
- Sensitive Claims 5
- Rating Reviews/Audits 85
- Contacts 158
- Debt Notices Received 311
- Insurance Questions 0
- Waivers Granted 10
- Pension Notification Letters Processed 95
- Largest Debt Waiver \$77,693

## ***Benefits Policy Team Operations***

### **Meetings:**

- April 5: Benefits Policy Team (BPT) met with Washington D.C./Indianapolis/Minnesota Claims teams in response to a Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) survey query after a recent House Veteran Affairs' Subcommittee Disability Assistance & Memorial Affairs (DAMA) hearing entitled, "Lost in Translation: How VA's Disability Claims and Appeals Letters Should be Simplified."
- April 8-10: Deputy Director for Benefits and Claims attended the April 2024 VBA Senior Leadership Symposium in Denver, CO.
- April 10: BPT virtually observed the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance & Memorial Affairs (DAMA) on pending legislation concerning the improvement of survivors claims and other bills to improve claims for VA disability compensation.
- April 11: BPT held a partnership consultation meeting with Bergmann & Moore concerning the upcoming ROAR visit, DSO school, and other training matters.

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Director

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End of VA&R weekly update – 04/12/2024