

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 16, 2017

The Honorable David J. Shulkin, M.D.
Secretary
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Ave.
Washington, D.C. 20571

Dear Secretary Shulkin,

We request your immediate action to ensure that deported veterans receive the proper attention and guidance in the submission and completion of their benefit claims. In addition, we seek information on what medical care is available for currently rated veterans and what the VA needs to ensure they can receive care. Many of us have a strong interest in this issue as we have visited with deported veterans and learned their struggles firsthand.

On June 3, 2017 and October 5-6, 2017, congressional delegations from the Congressional Hispanic Caucus and the Veterans' Affairs Committee respectively, visited the Deported Veterans Support House in Tijuana, Mexico. Our trips highlighted several issues keeping our veterans from receiving the benefits they have earned.

1. The proximity of approved VA doctors and facilities are thousands of miles away from the concentration of veterans living in Mexico where many deported veterans live in order to stay close to family and support networks. Additional facilities and medical professionals in Tijuana would solve this issue. We also request that you look at other areas along the U.S.-Mexico border like El Paso/Ciudad Juarez, Nogales/Nogales, etc. where deported veterans may live.
2. Contacting the Veteran's crisis line from outside the U.S. proved to be impossible without special hardware. A toll free international line where veterans can call and speak to qualified personnel would benefit not only deported veterans but other veterans who find themselves out of the country and in need of professional help.
3. While we applaud the VA's efforts to reduce the claims backlog, we remain concerned that claims submitted by deported veterans have been denied incorrectly. We would like to understand the application and review process for veterans who reside outside of the U.S. and if establishing a Noncitizen Veteran Liaison within the VA to coordinate between deported veterans, the VA, and relevant agencies would help prevent further claims from being mishandled.

We request an urgent meeting with you to discuss these issues and others related to deported veterans. The status of a "veteran" is not contingent upon citizenship and facilities around the

world continually deliver care to veterans living outside of the United States. These men and women served their country and we promised to take care of them, now we are breaking that promise. We respectfully request you exercise your authority to ensure that these veterans receive the care and benefits they have earned.

Sincerely,



Mark Takano
Member of Congress



Michelle Lujan Grisham
Member of Congress



Tim Walz
Member of Congress



Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress



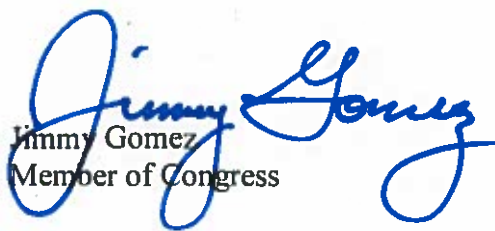
Madeleine Z. Bordallo
Member of Congress



J. Luis Correa
Member of Congress



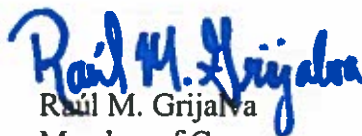
Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress



Jimmy Gomez
Member of Congress



Vicente Gonzalez
Member of Congress



Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress



Luis V. Gutiérrez
Member of Congress



Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



Grace F. Napolitano
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Kathleen M. Rice
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Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan
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Jan Schakowsky
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Albio Sires
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Darren Soto
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