

KATHY CASTOR  
14TH DISTRICT, FLORIDA



WASHINGTON OFFICE:  
205 CANNON BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515  
(202) 225-3376

DISTRICT OFFICE:  
4144 NORTH ARMENIA AVENUE  
SUITE 300  
TAMPA, FL 33607  
(813) 871-2817  
[www.castor.house.gov](http://www.castor.house.gov)

COMMITTEE ON  
ENERGY AND COMMERCE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
ENERGY AND POWER  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS  
COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET  
REGIONAL WHIP

## Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-0914

May 20, 2014

The Honorable Eric Shinseki  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20420

RE: Inspector General Interim Report of St. Petersburg Regional Office

Dear Secretary Shinseki:

A recent site visit by your Assistant Inspector General for Audits and Evaluations identified disturbing file storage and mail processing problems at the St. Petersburg VA Regional Office. This is particularly disappointing as I have urged your office numerous times over the past few years to rectify the problems at the Veterans Benefits Administration St. Petersburg Regional Office. Although progress has been made on the backlog of claims, veterans still wait too long to receive the benefits they have earned. It is my understanding that two of the three issues identified in the interim report have since been resolved; however, the need for an expedited and interim report itself indicates a need for increased accountability and leadership.

The visit identified official military personnel files (OMPFs) and service treatment records (STRs) that were shifted around in a way that impeded or delayed decisions on veterans' disability claims - this is inexcusable. It should not have taken an interim audit to resolve these two issues. The third and final item to be resolved is the task of hiring 20 temporary file clerks to aid in the transfer of 100,000 inactive claims folders to a VA records center in St. Louis. I am told this presently has a target completion date of August 1, 2014. **I will expect and await notification that this final task has been closed by that date.**

There is a growing perception that delays in care for our veterans are tolerated and when timely care is not provided failures are covered up. The continuing problems with claims filed by veterans for pension or medical care are troubling because they contradict the respect we owe these men and women who served their neighbors and our country so well. Indeed, these problems specifically violate the VA's own Core Values and Characteristics - "Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect and Excellence."

**I look forward to receiving confirmation from you that all three issues from the report have been successfully addressed.**

Please do not hesitate to contact me or my Legislative Assistant, Kevin Karpay, at (202) 225-3376.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kathy Castor".

Kathy Castor  
U.S. Representative  
Florida - District 14