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# United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6200

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January 29, 2013

The Honorable Michael J. Astrue  
Social Security Commissioner  
Social Security Administration  
6401 Security Boulevard  
Baltimore, MD 21235-6401

Dear Commissioner Astrue,

Like all Americans, we want benefits for our veterans to be accessible and provided in a prompt manner. As Chairman and Ranking Member of the Committee on Finance, we want all agencies under the Finance Committee's jurisdiction to be working together with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) towards that goal. We are disappointed by a recent report from the Government Accountability Office (GAO) which identified that a major delay in processing veterans' disability claims has been a lack of timely response for medical records from the Social Security Administration (SSA).

The details in the GAO report about SSA's lack of cooperation with VA are troubling. Though SSA has committed to sharing relevant medical records with the VA, VA staff reports difficulty obtaining SSA medical records in a timely fashion. VA staff rarely has a contact person at SSA who can assist in providing information on the status of VA requests. In one regional office, officials with VA commented that SSA takes more than a year to respond to requests for medical records. This situation is unacceptable and SSA must do better.

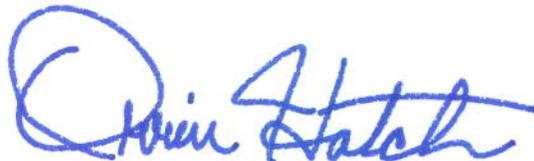
We understand that SSA has begun making changes that will improve the problems detailed in the GAO report. Please send us a detailed response that addresses each finding by GAO and provides us with specific steps SSA is taking to better meet the needs of VA and our veterans, and whether or not those changes have been implemented. If a proposed change has not been implemented, please provide details on why and specific details on the deadline for implementation.

Thank you in advance for your prompt response. We look forward to hearing from you by no later than February 19, 2013.

Sincerely,



Max Baucus  
Chairman



Orrin G. Hatch  
Ranking Member