

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 8, 2020

The Honorable David S. Ferriero
Archivist of the United States
National Archives and Records Administration
860 Adelphi Rd
College Park, MD 20740

Dear Mr. Ferriero,

We are writing to you regarding the challenges posed to the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) by the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting decrease in operating capacity of the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC). We share the concerns expressed by constituents of the states we represent that the NPRC's present inability to respond to current requests for veteran service records, and to reduce the growing backlog of requests initiated during the pandemic, is having a negative impact on veterans across the country. As you know, veterans and their families rely on the NPRC to quickly process service records so they may receive the health care and benefits that they have earned, and lay to rest loved ones that have died. We commend your increased partnership efforts with the Department of Veterans Affairs and innovative solutions enacted thus far to help your workforce flexibly serve veterans in the current challenging environment, and urge you to take further corrective actions to safely increase capacity at the NPRC and resume processing claims in a timelier manner.

We understand that prior to COVID-19, the majority of NPRC requests were responded to within ten days. We commend the leadership and employees of the NPRC for such exemplary customer service prior to this pandemic. While we acknowledge the real challenges posed by ensuring workforce safety during these trying times, we remain greatly concerned that the current levels of service, less than 10 percent of normal operating capacity, will yield an unsustainable backlog that will only worsen with time. In just over seven months since the early weeks of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a nearly 120 percent increase in claims and appeals waiting on Federal records. Scaling back operations so drastically eliminates a veteran's ability to submit new claims or appeal decisions in a timely manner.

It is imperative that the National Personnel Records Center hasten work toward operating at an increased capacity to service the needs of veterans while protecting NPRC employees from exposure to COVID-19. We are encouraged by your steadfast commitment to protecting those who work at the NPRC and Congress stands ready to assist you in increasing capacity to safely resume processing claims requests in a timely manner that will ensure quicker responses to veterans and families in need. We understand the unique situation that is affecting your enterprise, and look forward to working with you on behalf of the millions of Americans across

the country who depend on your important work. We urge you to find additional ways to increase your operational capacity so you may continue to serve the needs of our veterans and to keep us and the public apprised.

Thank you for your continued service to our country, and to our nation's veterans and their families.

Respectfully,



Jerry Moran
Chairman



Jon Tester
Ranking Member



Marsha Blackburn
United States Senator



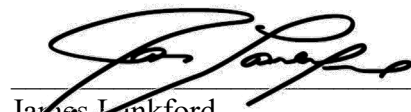
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