

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

August 24, 2015

Secretary Robert McDonald
US Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20420

Dear Secretary McDonald,

The Seventh Congressional District of North Carolina is home to more than 60,000 veterans. As a member of Congress representing this district, it is a priority of mine that these veterans receive the care and benefits that the Veterans Administration is required under law to provide them, which is why I am very concerned about recent problems that veterans in the Seventh District have experienced.

It has come to my attention that two veterans were mistakenly declared "deceased" by the Veteran's Administration and their benefits were terminated. Their wives were sent letters alerting them to the termination of their husbands' benefits and condolence letters with funds for burial expenses. When these wives received the letters they were confused, but more importantly, they were concerned about the loss of benefits for their husbands and their families. They immediately contacted my office to see why this happened and how to get their benefits reinstated.

There have been reports that the VA does not require a death certificate as proof for benefits to be terminated. Is this true? Everything from the Clerk of Court's Office to automobile insurance policies requires a Death Certificate and a Certificate of Executor to conduct business for the deceased. It would make sense that the VA would also have such a procedure in place. As a congressional office helping our veterans through casework assistance, I would like to know what protocols the VA has in place to ensure that veterans' benefits are not mistakenly terminated in the future. The answers to the following additional questions will be a great help to gaining a better understanding:

- 1) What documentation is required from the Social Security Administration for the DoD to determine the validity of a death notification?
- 2) What policies does the VA have in place to ensure that a veteran's benefits are not lost immediately due to a clerical error?

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- 3) What is the Veterans Administration doing to ensure that this error does not continue to occur?
- 4) If there is policy in place, how are you assuring compliance within the VA Regional Offices?

Thank you for your attention to this matter. Please feel free to either reply directly to me or my legislative director, Allison Cooke, at Allison.Cooke@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "David Rouzer". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped "D" and a stylized "Rouzer".