

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 22, 2022

Secretary Denis McDonough
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20420

Dear Secretary McDonough,

I am writing to share concerns that I consistently hear from Iowa veterans about the Beneficiary Travel Self-Service System (BTSSS). Many veterans have contacted my office recently to share their concerns about the lack of availability of staff to assist with travel pay questions, the long wait times to process paper claims, and difficulty in using the new BTSSS online system.

While I understand that the switch from kiosks to an online processing system is due to the implementation of a new contract for travel pay claims processing, it is clear that veterans need more assistance navigating the new system. I am particularly concerned about reports that there are not knowledgeable staff members available on the phones or in person to answer questions or help file claims.

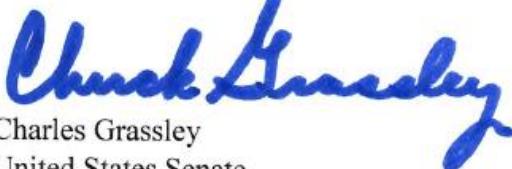
To further understand the actions the VA is taking to implement the BTSSS, I ask for the VA to answer the following the questions.

1. How many VA staff are dedicated to the BTSSS help desk each day?
2. How many calls does the BTSSS help desk receive each day?
3. What is the average wait time until a veteran's call is answered?
4. How many veterans are actively using the online system?
5. How many veterans have chosen to file paper claims and how long on average do paper claims take to be paid?
6. In February 2021, the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) began holding monthly national VSO engagements to provide awareness and training to VSO representatives on BTSSS. How many VSO representatives join the monthly VSO engagement, and what feedback has been received by the VA during these engagements?

7. Veterans have reported long wait times to get paper claims processed. The VHA stated it is developing a process that will digitally scan paper claims into BTSSS. When will this process be completed?

I look forward to hearing from the VA about the BTSSS and the actions being taken to assist veterans with this transition.

Sincerely,


Charles Grassley
United States Senate