

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

February 10, 2025

The Honorable Doug Collins  
Secretary of Veterans Affairs  
Department of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Mr. Secretary,

We are writing to express our deep concern regarding potential changes to the telework and remote work policies at the Board of Veterans' Appeals (BVA). The BVA plays a critical role in ensuring Veterans and their families receive the benefits they are entitled to under the law. Its mission to provide timely, fair, and impartial decisions on appeals is essential to the VA's benefits system. We strongly urge you to maintain the existing telework and remote work arrangements, which have proven integral to the Board's efficiency and success.

The BVA has made historic strides in managing its caseload, largely due to the expansion of telework and remote work policies. In Fiscal Year 2023, the Board adjudicated and dispatched a record-breaking 103,245 appeals – an 8.3% increase over FY 2022 – while also reducing the number of pending appeals for the first time in four years. This trend continued into FY 2024. As of the end of January 2025, the Board has issued 36,536 decisions this fiscal year – 3,776 ahead of last year's pace – while also conducting 6,636 hearings.

These record-breaking results are not coincidental. They reflect the efficiency gains achieved through telework and the ability to attract and retain experienced attorneys and Veterans Law Judges (VLJs). Currently, over 90 percent of VLJs and decision-writing attorneys work remotely or eligible for telework, and productivity has increased as a direct result. The quality of Board decisions has also improved for the third consecutive year, rising to 96 percent for Legacy appeals and 94 percent for AMA (Appeals Modernization Act) appeals in FY 2023.

Over the past five years, the BVA has strategically reduced its physical office footprint, cutting operational costs without compromising performance. In 2012, the Board occupied five floors at 425 I Street NW, Washington, DC. Today, it operates efficiently with just one floor, a reduction that has been facilitated entirely by telework and remote work programs. The continued success of remote and telework operations eliminates the need for costly expansion of office space and aligns with VA's broader goals of responsible resource management.

On January 20, 2025, in the Return to In-Person Work announcements, President Trump instructed "[h]eads of all departments and agencies in the executive branch" to, "as soon as practicable, take all necessary steps to terminate remote work arrangements and require employees to return to work in-person at their respective duty stations on a full-time basis, provided that the department and agency heads shall make exemptions they deem necessary."

Secretary Doug Collins

February 5, 2025

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As Secretary of Veterans Affairs, you have the authority to grant such an exemption to preserve telework and remote work arrangements at the BVA for the benefit of our nation's Veterans. Given the overwhelming evidence that telework has increased productivity, improved case processing times, and reduced costs, granting an exemption for the Board is not only justified but essential.

President Trump's misguided return to work mandate would not only require additional office space – incurring unnecessary costs – but it would also be a catastrophic blow to the Board's operations. Such a move would result in a sharp decline in productivity and morale. When combined with canceled job openings due to the hiring freeze, these draconian policies will cause significant attrition of the BVA's hard-working workforce and significantly undermine the Board's ability to process appeals — further delaying the delivery of benefits to our nation's veterans.

The Board's ability to deliver timely, high-quality decisions is a matter of national importance, and any disruption to its operations would directly impact those who have served our country. The data is clear: remote work and telework agreements have improved productivity, efficiency, and cost-effectiveness at the BVA. In FY 2023 alone, the Board surpassed 100,000 decisions, reduced pending appeals for the first time in years, and improved quality assurance – all while operating primarily in a virtual environment. These successes should not be reversed.

We strongly urge the Department of Veterans Affairs to preserve and protect the current telework and remote work policies at the BVA. The ability to continue working remotely is essential to maintaining efficiency, reducing costs, and most importantly, ensuring that our nation's Veterans receive timely decisions on their appeals.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,



Mark Takano  
Ranking Member  
House Committee on Veterans' Affairs



Richard Blumenthal  
Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs

Cc: Representative Mike Bost, Chairman, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs  
Senator Jerry Moran, Chairman, Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs