



# U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs  
Congressional Liaison Service

## *Casework Guide*

“...to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan...”

Abraham Lincoln



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# Introduction

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) maintains a presence on Capitol Hill to provide a convenient on-site location where Members can obtain assistance on casework and other VA-related issues for their Veteran constituency. The Congressional Liaison Service (CLS) offices are located in the Russell Senate Office Building and the Rayburn House Office Building.

The Senate Liaison Service was commissioned by Congress on December 10, 1922 and the House Liaison Service was commissioned on February 13, 1925. These offices were brought under the jurisdiction of the Department of Veterans Affairs in 1930 and remain so today.

We hope that you will find this Guide helpful. The goal of the CLS is to provide your office with prompt, efficient, and professional service and I invite you to contact us whenever you can use our assistance.

## Congressional Liaison Service Office Contact Information

**Director:** Annmarie Amaral

**Deputy Director:** Rick Armstrong

**Hours of Operation:**

Monday - Friday

8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

### Senate Office:

VA Congressional Liaison Service  
Room 189  
Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Phone: (202) 224-5351  
Fax: (202) 273-9988  
E-mail: [OCLA-CLS@va.gov](mailto:OCLA-CLS@va.gov)

### House Office:

VA Congressional Liaison Service  
Room 2026  
Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Phone: (202) 225-2280  
Fax: (202) 273-9988  
E-mail: [OCLA-CLS@va.gov](mailto:OCLA-CLS@va.gov)

### Liaisons

Jeremy Dillard  
Geisela Wimberly  
Alma Bourne  
Christie Smith  
Thomas Garloch



# VA's Congressional Liaison Service is Here to Help Your Office

VA's Congressional Liaison Service (CLS) offers assistance on a wide range of issues important to your constituents to include:

- Compensation and pension benefits
- Survivor benefits
- Medical treatment for Veterans and dependents
- Life insurance benefits
- Educational benefits
- Vocational rehabilitation and employment benefits
- Burial and death benefits
- Headstone and memorial marker applications
- Presidential Memorial Certificates
- VA forms and publications
- Locating Veterans
- Doing business with VA
- Purchasing a home or VA-acquired property
- VA employee questions regarding employment
- VA policies, regulations, and legislation
- Statistical data concerning Veterans, VA programs, and expenditures
- Briefings - CLS team members can brief caseworkers on services available through our office as well as on certain programs and benefits administered by our agency.
- Release of names and addresses (RONA's) (see pgs. 8-13)



## **Veteran Issues Not Administered By the Department of Veterans Affairs**

<b>Veteran Related Issue</b>	<b>Responsible Agency</b>
Arlington National Cemetery	<i>Department of the Army</i>
Combat-Related Special Compensation	<i>Department of Defense (Branch of Service)</i>
Concurrent Receipt	<i>Department of Defense - Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS)</i>
Discharge upgrade	<i>Department of Defense (Branch of Service)</i>
Employment and Training	<i>Department of Labor - Veterans' Employment &amp; Training Service (VETS)</i>
Military medals Military records Military discharge documents (DD-214)	<i>National Personnel Records Center (NPRC)</i> Online access: <a href="http://vetrecs.archives.gov/">http://vetrecs.archives.gov/</a>
Small Business Loans	<i>Small Business Administration</i>
Survivors' Benefits Program	<i>Department of Defense</i>
TriCare	<i>Department of Defense</i>
Vietnam Memorial Wall	<i>Department of Defense: Compiles the casualty list</i> <i>National Park Service: Maintains the Wall</i>
Records destroyed in the 1973 fire at the National Personnel Records Center	<i>National Personnel Records Center</i>

For a complete list of Congressional Liaison Offices for other federal agencies, please visit: <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/98-446.pdf>

### **Veteran Service Organizations:**

For a listing of Veteran Organizations, please visit: <http://www.va.gov/vso/index.cfm>

*This directory is published annually and lists Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs) as well as State, Commonwealth, and Territorial Directors of Veterans Affairs.*



## **Written Inquiries**

### **How Written Casework Inquiries Are Processed:**

1. Letters can be faxed, mailed, or e-mailed to the CLS.

*Please note – All correspondence sent by traditional mail is subject to security screening and the decontamination process which will delay receipt. Please fax all inquiries requiring immediate attention.*

2. CLS sends the Member office an email acknowledging receipt of the inquiry.
3. CLS assigns the inquiry to the appropriate VA office to obtain the response.
4. The assigned office's response is directed to the Member or the constituent if requested by the caseworker and when deemed appropriate.
5. VA retains a copy of the response for record.

### **How to Prevent Unnecessary Delays:**

1. Make certain that all names on the correspondence are legible.
2. Confirm that all enclosures referred to in the letter are included. If enclosures are not included, it's helpful to provide an explanation as to why they are not.
3. Include a privacy release from the Veteran authorizing access to and release of information from his/her VA file. The privacy release will authorize VA to give information to the Member. VA will not release information to a third party (spouse, family member, friend, etc.) without the expressed consent of the Veteran.
4. Entitlement to VA benefits is based on the Veteran's service and the VA file is established under the Veteran's name. Therefore, any related correspondence should include the following information:
  - a. The Veteran's full name
  - b. The Veteran's VA claim number or Social Security number
  - c. The name of the VA medical center where treatment has been provided, when appropriate
  - d. The Dependent's name, when appropriate
  - e. When the Veteran's VA claim number or Social Security number is not available, other pertinent information should be provided, such as date of birth, date of death, dates of military service, branch of service, and military service number.



# **Telephonic Inquiries**

## **How Telephonic Casework Inquiries Are Processed:**

1. A Congressional Liaison Representative (CLR) will work with the caseworker to obtain all necessary information in order to best respond to the inquiry.
2. The CLR will take the necessary steps to obtain the most complete and accurate response as quickly as possible for the caseworker.

## **Response time:**

1. Whenever possible, the CLR will provide an immediate response.
2. Further research is often necessary when dealing with complex inquiries. In these situations the CLR will attempt to provide an educated approximation of when the caseworker can expect the response.
3. CLS is always available to discuss an inquiry and/or the status of a response to an inquiry with Congressional caseworkers.
4. If the CLR who managed the inquiry anticipates a response may take longer than originally estimated, they will attempt to contact the caseworker to provide the status of the inquiry and an updated estimate for the response.

## **How to Prevent Unnecessary Delays:**

Entitlement to VA benefits is based on the Veteran's service and the VA file is established under the Veteran's name. Caseworkers should have the following information available when calling for assistance:

1. The Veteran's full name
2. The Veteran's VA claim number or Social Security number
3. The name of the VA medical center where treatment has been provided, when appropriate
4. The Dependent's name, when appropriate
5. When the Veteran's VA claim number or Social Security number is not available, other pertinent information should be provided, such as date of birth, date of death, dates of military service, branch of service, and military service number.
6. If the caseworker contacts CLS regarding a case with which he/she has been in contact with another VA office, please provide the name of the previous VA point of contact, and which office or department they work in.



## **Release of Names and Addresses (RONA):**

Title 38 of the United States Code authorizes the Secretary of Veterans Affairs (VA) to release the names or addresses, or both, of any present or former members of the Armed Forces, and/or their beneficiaries:

- To nonprofit organizations (including Members of Congress) when the purpose of the release is directly connected with the conduct of programs and the use of benefits covered by title 38.
  - As part of VA's Outreach Program for the purpose of advising Veterans of non-VA Federal, State, and local benefits and programs.
  - To Federal, State, or local agencies, and to any criminal or civil law enforcement governmental agency or instrumentality charged under law with the protection of the public health or safety if a qualified representative of the agency or instrumentality has made a written request stating the names or addresses will be used for a purpose authorized by law.
1. Names and addresses may not be released for such purposes as soliciting memberships for an organization or so that the names may be listed or inscribed on monuments or memorials. If a request is denied, a requester has the right to appeal the denial to the VA General Counsel.
  2. Requests for Veteran or beneficiary names and addresses must be in writing, and should be sent to:

### **Senate**

Annamarie Amaral  
Director  
Office of Congressional and Legislative  
Affairs Liaison Service  
Department of Veterans Affairs  
189 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

### **House**

Annamarie Amaral  
Director  
Office of Congressional and Legislative  
Affairs Liaison Service  
Department of Veterans Affairs  
2026 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

**Please note: Requests are processed according to date of receipt and the average processing time is approximately 45 – 60 business days.**

3. Requests for names and addresses must:
  - Identify the category of Veterans for whom information is sought (recently discharged Veterans, those Veterans currently receiving VA benefits, or both). This information is necessary since the data comes from different VA production locations; both locations are separate from the Enterprise Record Services (ERS) office, which is located in the VA Central Office (VACO).
    - Names and addresses of recently discharged Veterans come from the Veterans Assistance Discharge System (VADS). VADS data comes from a Veteran's DD Form 214, Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty. VADS contains data by month of discharge for the previous five years. Addresses in VADS are as reported on the DD Form 214; they are not updated if a Veteran moves. Only addresses for Veterans discharged in the past few months are likely to be current. When possible, a request for VADS data should specify the months and years for which names and addresses are desired.





## Release of Names and Addresses (RONA):

- Names and addresses of Veterans or their beneficiaries currently receiving benefits come from the Compensation and Pension (C&P) system and/or the Education (EDU) system. The release of names and addresses of beneficiaries is limited for beneficiaries of incapacitated or deceased Veterans who are currently receiving benefits.
- Data from the VADS, C&P and EDU systems is extracted by zip code. A request should include a list of individual zip codes, zip code ranges, or a combination of the two in numerical order for the geographical area for which addresses are desired. Zip code ranges consist of three or more zip codes that run chronologically in ascending order (12345-12348; 98765-98770); zip codes that do not fit into a range must be listed individually in chronological ascending order (12344, 12349, 12350, 12352). Requests that only specify names or counties, cities, townships or Congressional Districts cannot be used to process a request. Nine and 13 digit zip codes cannot be processed. Please only include five digit zip codes in chronological, ascending (i.e. smallest to largest) order. Non-compliance with this requirement will result in further delays, and/or a returned request. A State Representative may specify entire state on the request, if he/she is making a request for all the names and addresses of Veterans in that state.
- **The VA does not provide RONAs by Congressional District – only by zip code.** This means that requests delivered **MAY CONTAIN** Veteran names and addresses **OUTSIDE of their Congressional District**, but in a zip code requested. These “split zip codes” contain multiple Congressional Districts and cannot be further delineated. Any name and address provided needs to be validated by the Member office as being in their Congressional District.
- Include proof, satisfactory to VA, that the organization seeking the list is a nonprofit organization. An Internal Revenue Service tax exemption statement or proof that the organization is a governmental body is acceptable.
- Include a statement explaining:
  - The purpose for which the list of names and addresses is requested, and how the purpose is "directly connected with the conduct of programs and the utilization of benefits" under title 38 U.S.C. "Direct connection" refers to any activity that results in a Veteran becoming certified as qualifying for, applying for, and/or receiving one or more of the benefits provided under title 38, or
  - That the requester (or qualified representative) is a criminal or civil law enforcement governmental agency or instrumentality charged under applicable law with the protection of the public health or safety, and that the names and addresses will be used for a purpose authorized by law.
  - The program and the resources the organization proposes to devote to the purpose.



## Release of Names and Addresses (RONA):

- Include a statement that the organization and all members who will have access to the list are aware of the penalty provision of 38 U.S.C, Section 5701(f), and will not use the list for any purpose other than that specified. Section 5701(f) states:
    - "Any organization or member thereof or other person who, knowing that the use of any name or address released by the Secretary pursuant to the preceding sentence is limited to the purpose specified in such sentence, willfully uses such name or address for a purpose other than those so specified, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and be fined not more than \$5,000 in the case of a first offense and not more than \$20,000 in the case of any subsequent offense."
    - VA inserts administrative controls in each list to ensure that material distributed using the names and addresses are consistent with the purposes stated in the request. In some cases, VA may require advance approval of the material prior to approval of a request.
  - Include the name, office, title and telephone number (and fax number, if available) of the person to be contacted in the event that technical questions arise.
4. The output media that are provided to Members of Congress are:
- Name and address lists in an encrypted Compact Disk (CD-ROM) (for lists from the Compensation, Pension, and the Education System only).
  - Name and address lists in gummed labels, or printed list (for lists from the Veterans Assistance Discharge System only).
  - The information for the CD-ROM will be created in Microsoft (MS) WordPad only, **MS EXCEL spreadsheet is not an option**. A password for opening the disk and instructions for converting the MS WordPad file to MS Excel will be sent with the final product.
5. A requester may not receive a list of names and addresses that duplicates a list already released to another element, segment, or chapter of the same organization. Once received, a requester may not duplicate a list of names and addresses nor may a list be released to another party without prior notification to, and receipt of approval from, the Enterprise Records Service (005R1B).
6. In accordance with 38 U.S.C. and applicable VA regulations, requesters are charged for the costs involved in setting up computer programs, for computer run time, and for other support activities associated with the release of names and addresses.
- There is no charge for the first request from a Member of Congress in any 12-month period beginning with the date of the approval letter. A subsequent request from a Member within the same 12-month period is charged the same rates as all other requesters.
  - Federal, State and local government agencies may be charged for data if the purpose for which the list will be used is not deemed a benefit to the Veteran or VA.
  - All organizations paying for data may submit requests as often as they wish. VA makes every effort to avoid giving a paying requester overlapping data.



## **Release of Names and Addresses (RONA):**

- A cost estimate is developed and provided to the requester after a request is approved. Payment must be received prior to production of an initial or recurring list. Payments may be made by certified check, postal money order, or bank money order made payable to the Department of Veterans Affairs. Payment must be forwarded to the VA Central Office. Purchase orders or requests for billing cannot be accepted. Payments for recurring lists should be for increments of either six months or one year. To ensure continuation of a recurring list, the payment must be received at least 30 days prior to the scheduled run date. If payment for a recurring list is not received, the computer program developed to produce that particular list is deleted from the system. An additional development fee would be charged to reinstall the program in the system.
7. Additional information:
- Requests for lists of educationally disadvantaged Veterans (those who have not completed high school) should be sent to the nearest VA regional office.
  - From time-to-time VA receives requests from persons seeking to contact individual Veterans (for example, to locate a wartime "buddy," to distribute military unit reunion notices or to gather facts regarding a particular wartime event). VA offers re-mailing services via a process known as Blind Mailing. Persons seeking re-mailing services should contact the nearest VA regional office. This service is not part of the Release of Names and Addresses Program.

For questions or comments, please call (202) 461-7970 or (877) 727-7844 or e-mail us at [RONA@VA.GOV](mailto:RONA@VA.GOV)

Department of Veterans Affairs  
Enterprise Records Service (005R1B)  
810 Vermont Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20420



## **Release of Names and Addresses (RONA):**

(SAMPLE SENATE REQUEST)

Annamarie Amaral  
Director  
Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs' Liaison Service  
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
189 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Ms. Amaral:

I am informed that the Department of Veterans Affairs has the capacity to provide the names and addresses of Veterans' in its discharge system, compensation, and pension files and education files in my state. I would like to keep the Veterans in my state informed about legislation and benefits which directly affect them. I would, therefore; greatly appreciate it if you would provide me with these names and addresses.

I am making this request in my official capacity as a United States Senator, and I am aware that the confidentiality of these Veterans names and addresses is protected by Title 38, United States Code and the Privacy Act. Accordingly, I will maintain this confidentiality, and confine my communications to areas of legislation and benefit changes which affect Veterans. Please be assured that my staff and I are aware that our use of Veterans names and addresses must remain limited to the reporting on legislation and changes in benefits and/or entitlement programs. We also understand that a willful use of the names and addresses for purposes other than those specified shall be construed as a misdemeanor and render my staff and me subject to the penalties noted in Section 5701(f).

I wish to receive this listing in the form of {insert your media output preference}.

If you require further information concerning our intended use of these names and addresses, please contact {insert point of contact} of my staff at {insert email address, phone number, or both}.

Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

{Include proper signature}



## **Release of Names and Addresses (RONA):**

(SAMPLE HOUSE REQUEST)

Annamarie Amaral  
Director  
Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs' Liaison Service  
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
2026 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Ms. Amaral:

I am informed that the Department of Veterans Affairs has the capacity to provide the names and addresses of Veterans' in its discharge system, compensation, and pension files and education files in my congressional district. I would like to keep the Veterans in my district informed about legislation and benefits which directly affect them. I would, therefore; greatly appreciate it if you would provide me with these names and addresses.

I am making this request in my official capacity as a Member of the United States House of Representatives, and I am aware that the confidentiality of these Veterans names and addresses is protected by Title 38, United States Code and the Privacy Act. Accordingly, I will maintain this confidentiality, and confine my communications to areas of legislation and benefit changes which affect Veterans. Please be assured that my staff and I are aware that our use of Veterans names and addresses must remain limited to the reporting on legislation and changes in benefits and/or entitlement programs. We also understand that a willful use of the names and addresses for purposes other than those specified shall be construed as a misdemeanor and render my staff and me subject to the penalties noted in Section 5701(f).

I am enclosing the zip codes in my district to aid you in compiling the list and to facilitate responding to my request. I wish to receive this listing in the form of {insert your media output preference}.

If you require further information concerning our intended use of these names and addresses, please contact {insert point of contact} of my staff at {insert email address, phone number, or both}.

Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

{Include proper signature}



## **Additional Resources:**

### **Veterans Crisis Line: 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1**

**The VA Web Site:** We encourage all Congressional staff to explore [www.VA.gov](http://www.VA.gov). Our website contains a wealth of information about programs and benefits administered by the Department. It also offers the convenience of applying for many benefits through the use of on-line applications. In addition to VA services and programs, the VA website also contains links to [other federal](#) and [state agencies](#) that administer benefits for Veterans and their dependents.

**VA Congressional Notifications:** To receive updates on VA issues, please visit <https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USVAOCLA/subscriber/new> to subscribe to VA's Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs Congressional notifications.

**Health Care Eligibility:** Veterans of recent conflicts are eligible for five years of healthcare from VA - regardless of the status of any disability claim submitted. For more information: [http://www.va.gov/healthbenefits/apply/returning\\_servicemembers.asp](http://www.va.gov/healthbenefits/apply/returning_servicemembers.asp)

**VA Transformation to Digital Claims Process:** Veterans can now use *eBenefits*, a joint VA-DoD client services portal with over 55 self-service options, to file benefit claims online in an easy-to-use, prompt-based system. Veterans can also upload supporting claims information that feeds into VA's paperless claims processing system; check the status of claims or appeals; review their VA payment history; and obtain military documents, among other actions. For more information: [www.eBenefits.VA.gov](http://www.eBenefits.VA.gov)

**Fully Developed Claims:** Fully developed claims offer Veterans and survivors faster decisions on disability compensation, pension, and survivor benefit claims. Veterans and survivors submit all of the claim-specific information and evidence needed to substantiate a disability. At the time of applications, claimants certify they have nothing further to give VA regarding the claim, thus eliminating the need for VA to undertake a lengthy search for any missing information or evidence. For more information, please visit: <http://www.benefits.va.gov/fdc/>

**Workload and Performance Reports:** You can view the current inventory of claims, backlog, and other workload measures for both the national level and at the regional office level by visiting: <http://www.vba.va.gov/reports>

**VA's National Cemetery Administration:** NCA's [Funeral Director Resource Kit](#) can be found at: <http://www.cem.va.gov/cem/funeraldirector.asp>

**Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017:** The Veteran Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017 became law Aug. 23, 2017 (Pub L. 115-55). It is also known as the Appeals Modernization Act. The new law modernizes the current claims and appeals process; includes three review options for disagreements with decisions; requires improved notification of VA decisions; provides earlier claim resolution; and ensures Veterans receive the earliest effective date possible. For more information, visit: <https://benefits.va.gov/benefits/appeals.asp>

