The American Legion

OFFICE OF THE
NATIONAL COMMANDER

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October 14, 2016

Honorable Richard Blumenthal
Ranking Member
Senate Veterans Affairs Committee
SH-825A Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Ranking Member Blumenthal:

On behalf of the more than 2 million members of The American Legion, I express our full support for S. 3328, the *Department of Veterans Appeals Modernization Act of 2016*. This legislation would reform the VA's disability benefits appeals process – a top priority for VA leaders, the administration and many Veterans Service Organizations.

For veterans electing to appeal VA decisions, their wait is measured not in days or months; it is all too often measured in years. A veteran appealing a decision to the Board of Veterans' Appeals waits longer to receive a decision than a standard four year enlistment. Imagine honorably serving your nation for four years and having VA take longer than those four years to grant benefits earned through defending this nation.

The current appeals process is clearly broken and in dire need of reform to ensure it's able to meet the needs of veterans. This reform would provide veterans with a simple, fair, and transparent appeals process in which the vast majority would receive a final appeals decision within one year of filing an appeal - while ensuring that veterans' rights remain protected. This new process is necessary, responsible, and sustainable. That is why The American Legion wholeheartedly supports this much-needed legislation. It represent a combined team effort between VA, Congress, and the Veteran Service Organizations to produce highly needed reforms to the complex disability claims appeals system and The American Legion is proud of the work accomplished here.

The American Legion thanks you for the leadership you have shown to bring improvement to VA. We are committed to working with you and your Senate and House colleagues to shepherd a veterans benefits legislative package through Congress that includes appeals modernization before this session ends that we can all be proud of.

Sincerely,

Charles E. Schmidt

CHARLES E. SCHMIDT
National Commander