

Clinton Administration History:
Submission Materials & Correspondence Checklist

Name of Agency Dept. of Veterans Affairs

Date:	Description of Submission or Correspondence:	Contact Information:
7/18/00	1 Hist. outline	Maria Fernandez 273-5760



Department of Veterans Affairs
Washington, DC 20420

Office of the Assistant Secretary
for Intergovernmental and
International Affairs

Fax Cover Sheet

Date:

From: Maria C. Fernandez
Deputy Assistant Secretary for
Intergovernmental and International
Affairs

Phone: (202) 273-5760

Fax: (202) 273-5716

To: ANNE Brand - 456-9067
Ted Widmer - 456-2451

Phone:

Fax:

Number of pages including cover sheet: _____

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Attached is a copy of VA's
Bulletin sent me on August 15

08/16/00 17:29 FAX 2022/05/10 VA/INTERGOV. AFFAIRS 002/010

**Veterans Benefits Administration
Administrative History Project
Draft Outline—8/14/00**

Compensation and Pension Service

- Undiagnosed illness for Gulf War veterans
- Tobacco legislation
- Transition to the reengineered environment, (e.g. merger of Adjudication and Veterans Service Divisions)
- BPR Sites
- Case management
- Virtual VA
- BDD in Europe

Education Service

- Consolidation of all education processing into four Regional Processing Offices
- Consolidation of all Education Services functions into the four Regional Processing Offices
- 50th Anniversary of the GI Bill
- Rewrite of all education letters in plain language (Reader Focused Writing)
- Installed imaging (TIMS—The Image Management System) in all Regional Processing Offices
- Developed Education Service Home Page
- Developed and installed ECAP (Enrollment Certification Automated Processing) and started development of the Education Expert System (TEES)
- Installed toll free telephone service for education inquiries
- The commission on Servicemembers and Veterans Transition Assistance completed its report
- Student monthly verification of enrollment by phone and internet became available
- Program Evaluation as a result of GPRA

- The following Public Laws affected VA Education Programs:
 - ✍ 103-160 National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1994
 - Expanded the definition of veterans who are eligible to elect chapter 30 benefits based on involuntary separation from the armed Forces.
 - Allowed, effective 11-30-93, members of the Selected Reserve to receive chapter 106 benefits for graduate training subject to the availability of funds
 - Extended SMOCTA eligibility dates by 1 year subject to the availability of funds. Required a veteran to apply by 9-30-96 and begin training by 3-31-97
 - ✍ 103-335 Department of Defense Appropriation Act for Fiscal year 1995
 - Allowed the remaining funds from the original SMOCTA appropriation to be used during FY 1995.
 - ✍ 103-446 Veterans' Benefits Improvement act of 1994
 - Provided, effective 10-1-94, flight training as a permanent program for chapter 30, chapter 1606, and chapter 32.
 - Established, effective 10-1-94, a 2-year pilot program for alternative teacher certification.
 - Permitted, effective 10-8-94, VA to approve courses leading to a standard college degree offered by foreign colleges and universities which include non-traditional training away from the school.
 - Extended chapter 30 category IIIa eligibility to members of the Coast Guard who served on active duty before 9-30-94 and were involuntarily separated during the five-year period beginning on 10-1-94.
 - ✍ 104-106 National Defense Appropriation Act for Fiscal Year 1996
 - Permitted DOD, effective 2-10-96, to provide additional payment ("kickers") of chapter 1606 and chapter 30 benefits.
 - ✍ 104-188 Small business Job Protection act of 1996
 - Provided for an increase in the Federal minimum wage to \$4.75 hourly effective October 1, 1996, and for a further increase to \$5.15 hourly effective September 1, 1997. (This affected the Work-Study Program.)
 - ✍ 104-201 National Defense Appropriation Act for Fiscal Year 1997
 - Extended chapter 30 eligibility, effective 10-1-96, to ROTC graduates who went on active duty as commissioned officers after 10-30-96, and who received \$2,000 or less in any one year under the ROTC program.
 - ✍ 104-275 Veterans' Benefits Improvement Act of 1996
 - Eliminated, effective 10-9-96, the requirement that open circuit TV courses be taken concurrently with at least one resident course.
 - Eliminated, effective 10-9-96, the 80 percent rate for cooperative training.

- Modified, effective 10-9-96, the requirement that courses may not be approved if they have been in operation for less than two-years (the "two-year" rule).
 - Modified, effective 10-9-96, the criteria for approval of accredited courses
 - Allowed additional chapter 32 (and section 903) participants to elect chapter 30 during a one-year open season ending on October 8, 1997.
 - Allowed additional persons to elect chapter 30 who first performed full-time National Guard duty under title 32 U.S.C. between July 1, 1985 through November 28, 1989.
- ✍ 105-114 Veterans Omnibus Bill
- Provided, effective retroactively to 10-9-96, an increased rate of payment for chapter 30, category II benefits for veterans pursuing cooperative training.
 - Required that individuals who, during the one-year period beginning on 10-9-96, made the election from chapter 32 to chapter 30 must have an honorable discharge.
- ✍ 105-178 Veterans Benefits Act of 1998
- Canceled the automatic increase due 10-1-98, and substituted a 20% rate increase
- ✍ 105-206 Internal Revenue Service Restructuring Act of 1998
- Increased, effective 10-1-98, the basic chapter 35 full-time monthly rate from \$404 to \$485.
- ✍ 105-261 Strom Thurmond National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1999
- Permitted DOD, effective 10-1-98, to increase the additional payment ("kicker") of chapter 30 benefits to \$950.
 - Permitted individuals, retroactive to 10-7-97, who receive an enlistment bonus to also be eligible for a "kicker".
- ✍ 105-368 Veterans Programs Enhancement act of 1999
- Changed reporting fees to educational institutions from yearly based on the number of veterans enrolled on October 31 of the year or an alternate date selected by individual schools to the number of veterans who enroll in a school during the entire calendar year.
 - Changed the work-study program to make optional, rather than mandatory, an advance payment of work-study allowance.
 - Changed the high school requirement under chapter 30 to allow servicemembers to use college granted credits for life experiences as a means of meeting the high school requirement.
 - Required an individual to meet the medical requirements on the day he or she began a course of flight training.
 - Provided a waiver of some of the wage requirements when the United States or a State or local government operates the training program.

- Required VA and military service branches to expand outreach services concerning VA education program requirements to members of the armed forces.
- Required the military service branches to ensure separating servicemembers are well informed of the eligibility requirements for VA education benefits.
- 106-117 Veterans Millennium Health Care and Benefits Act
 - Restored chapter 35 eligibility to remarried surviving spouses of veterans who terminate their remarriage on or after 11-30-99.
 - Allows VA to authorize chapter 30 benefits to persons pursuing courses that prepare them to take college or graduate school entrance examinations.
 - Requires VA, effective retroactively to 7-1-85, for an enlisted member or warrant officer who serves continuously on active duty and successfully completes officer training school, is discharged to accept a commission as an officer on active duty, to consider the individual to have served without a break in service, provided the break does not exceed 90 days.

Loan Guaranty Service

- Restructuring:
- Loan Processing/Loan Servicing:
- Reorganized/Consolidated Loan Processing and Loan Servicing from 45 Regional Offices to 9 Regional Loan Centers
- [begun 1996; completed 08/00]
- Eligibility:
- Established 2 centers to perform all Eligibility Functions
- [begun Spring 1997; completed Fall 1999]
- Portfolio Loan Servicing:
- Contracted for the servicing of VA's home loan portfolio; worked with Loan Guaranty Information Technology staff to develop a computer system to support the change.
- Established Portfolio Loan Oversight Unit (PLOU).
- Electronic Data Interchange: EDI
- Loan Guaranty Certificates are issued automatically. Loan file data and requests for guaranty are transmitted electronically. Eliminates paper handling and speeds processing times.

- Electronic transmission of appraisal reports to both the VA and to lender participants. Speeds appraisal processing times.
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- Loan Policy and Construction & Valuation:
- C&V:
- VAAS: VA Assignment System. First on-line application which allows case number and appraisal assignments to be obtained through use of the Internet. 07/99
- LAPP: Lender Appraisal Processing Program. Allows lenders to review appraisals and set property values.
- From 1993- present, participation rate in this program has grown from 15% to 72%
- Loan Processing:
- Refinancing: Personalized letters to 1.66 million Veteran homeowners to notify them that they could refinance their VA loans at lower interest rates.
- Lender Handbook—revised in Reader Focused Writing and Information Mapping format; published on the internet 08/2000; eliminated printing over 20,000 handbooks and related changes.
- Customer Satisfaction Surveys: Veteran, and Lender surveys instituted
- Loan Management:
- FATS— Foreclosure Avoidance Through Servicing.
- Implemented supplemental servicing performance measure (FATS - Foreclosure Avoidance Through Servicing) under Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (GPRA)
- Empowered private servicers to approve alternatives to foreclosure (deeds in lieu of foreclosure and compromise claims/short sales) in the SLMP program
- Quantified the savings to VA as over \$100 million per year due to successful interventions by VA employees to help veterans reinstate home loans
- Established controls to satisfy GAO/OIG concerns which had earlier prevented VA from obtaining clean opinions on annual financial statements
- Placed into production a new ADP system to track delinquent VA loans
- Published a VA Servicing Guide for industry partners

- Encouraged continued participation in the VA home loan program by private industry through implementation of procedures to speed payments for properties conveyed to VA

- **Property Management:**
 - **PLAN:** Property Management Local Area Network
 - This is an online application that allows field stations to manage and track status of acquired properties and support automated payment and collection processes. It replaced the outdated batch-oriented property management systems and intensive paper record keeping.
 - Decreased both inventory and holding times to the lowest level in 15 years
- **Monitoring Unit:**
 - Monitoring Unit's oversight decreases risk inherent in granting automatic authority to close loans to the lender.
 - From 1992 to present, 250 audits of VA Loan Guaranty lenders and servicers have been conducted; this enabled government to recover and avoid losses of \$20 million dollars over this period.
- **Information Management & Technology:**
 - **ELI:** Electronic Lender Information. Maintains lender information
 - **Loan Processing:** issues guarantees, performs quality control measures, runs automatic edits of data
 - **SGL (Standard General Ledger) conversion:** former system was not in compliance with government mandates; shut down and converted to program that was in compliance with government standards
 - Ten Computer-based training modules, in a variety of subjects, have been designed and are available for staff as well as lenders.

- **Public Laws:**
- [Per #12 and Legis. History]
- 103-66: 1994
- Increased maximum loan guaranty amount to \$50,750
- 103-446: 11/02/94
- VA can restore entitlement on one-time basis for a veteran who has paid off the prior loan, but has not yet disposed of the property
- Extends loan guaranty eligibility to Reservists discharged with service-related disabilities, and extends benefits to their surviving spouses should the Reservist die in service or as result of service-connected disability
- 24-month active duty requirement also amended to include extension of benefits to those who do not meet the 24-month criteria b/c a reduction in force
- 104-275: 1996
- VA reauthorized to make direct loans to Native American veterans
- 105-114: 11/21/98
- Extended Native American Veteran Housing Loan Pilot Program until 12/31/01

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Insurance Service

- Insurance Service Initiatives/ Legislation/Accomplishments
- **Consolidation of St. Paul and Philadelphia Insurance Functions**
- Reinventing Government (REGO II) proposal
- Consolidation completed in April 1999
- Combining the two offices in Philadelphia resulted in economies of scale
- Cost savings of \$4 million over a 3-year period and annual savings of \$1.4 million after that
- Philadelphia assumed St. Paul's workload without adding staffing
- **National Performance Review Regulatory Reform Initiative***
- Insurance Service reviewed all Insurance regulations found in title 38 of the CFR's (Parts 6, 7, 8, 8a and 9) as part of an NPR regulatory reform initiative.
- Based on this review, regulatory amendments were submitted resulting in the elimination of 109 CFR pages which contained regulations that were obsolete, no longer applicable or merely restatements of statutory provisions.
- A total of 27 pages were rewritten/reinvented for clarity.
- **Reader Focused Writing (RFW) Initiative (NPR)**
- Members of the Insurance Staff have been key participants in the RFW effort.
- Assisted CO in development and training and airing the course over the satellite network
- Nationally spread and now known as the "Plain English Network"
- Insurance Staff members represented VBA at the Vice President's National Performance Review (NPR) Office and have taught RFW at other Federal agencies.
- Insurance Service began writing all proposed and final regulations in RFW. The first RFW VBA regulation was recently published in the Federal Register
- We have begun a vigorous process of rewriting all existing regulations in RFW.
- Pursuant to 'Presidential Memorandum on Plain Language' dated June 1, 1998 (supporting document to add in Appendix*)
- RFW Writer's Guide; Protocol Guide and other materials prepared by the Insurance Staff as supporting documents
- **Legislative Initiatives/Supervised Programs (SGLI/VGLI)**
- Increased the basic amount of SGLI/VGLI coverage to \$200,000
- Merged Retired Reservists SGLI into VGLI program
- Extended VGLI to members of Ready Reserves
- Allowed members to convert VGLI to a commercial policy at any time
- Renamed the SGLI program from 'Servicemen's' to 'Servicemembers'
- Provided accelerated benefits to members diagnosed with terminal conditions
- Increase SGLI/VGLI coverage to \$250,000 (proposed)
- Provide coverage for dependents of SGLI insureds (proposed)

- **Legislative Initiatives/Administered Programs (proposed)**
- Alternate Beneficiary to Claim NSLI and USGLI Policy Proceeds
- RH Term Capping
- Lower S-DVI program premiums to a competitive Level
- Increase the maximum coverage under the VMLI program from \$90,000 to \$200,000
- Allow insureds to retain VMLI past age 70
- Exclude government life insurance benefits for Federal income/asset-limit programs

- **Interagency Relations/Partnerships**
- Developed partnership with Social Security Administration for numerous matching programs where we exchanged data to update Insurance Master records. (The Service recently won a Vice Presidential Hammer Award for these initiatives)

- Purpose: To locate policyholders to send statements and pay money that was returned as undeliverable
- As of March 2000, we have corrected 42,600 addresses and paid over \$5 million to policyholder whom we located

- Developed partnership with Treasury on "Combo printing" to allow Treasury to mail an Insurance letter or explanation of benefits along with the check when appropriate

- Coordinate with the Department of Defense and The Prudential Life Insurance of America on initiatives that impact the SGLI/VGLI programs.

- Insurance staff have conducted RFW training for IRS, Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA) and Department of Agriculture

- **Internet Use/Computer Based Training**
- Insurance program management uses the Internet extensively for legal research and other types of research
- Also used to trace lost or stolen checks
- Currently developing computer based training modules which should increase the accuracy of work
- Insurance Internet **Self Service** will allow policyholders to access their policy records to view the status of their account, policy values, etc

- **Service-Enhancing Initiatives**

- **Insurance Self Service Initiative**
- Customers will be able to directly interact with their own insurance records
- Via either **Web site** or toll-free telephone service using our Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system
- →Supporting document: **Government Paperwork Elimination Act (GPEA)**

- **Paperless Processing Initiative**
- →Imaging system will provide electronic storage of Insurance records and on-line
- access to images of those records.
- →Creation of a large data base of imaged documents based on updated
- information
- →Later stage will involve massive retirement of insurance folders
- →Will improve timeliness and quality of service
- →Will reduce costs for policyholders
- →Supporting document: **Government Paperwork Elimination Act (GPEA)**

- **Electronic Fund Transfer/Direct Deposit**
- →Policyholders and beneficiaries may now take advantage of funds being directly deposited into their bank accounts
- →Obviates risks of lost or stolen checks and need to conduct check tracer actions on these checks
- →Reduction of postage costs

- **Explanation of Benefits (EOB) Statement with Insurance Checks**
- →Reduces postage costs
- →Improves communications

- **Alliance Accounts**
- →SGLI/VGLI beneficiaries receive their payment of proceeds via a checkbook in an interest bearing account from which they can write checks for any amount from \$250 to the full amount of the proceeds

- **Beneficiary Counseling**
- →Provides SGLI/VGLI beneficiaries free, personalized, objective financial counseling and advice

- **Insurance Hoax**
- OSGLI handles HOAX mail as most of that mail now pertains to the SGLI/VGLI programs
- Over the past 7 years, Insurance Service has increased its efforts to
- disseminate accurate information to refute misinformation pertaining to the
- the dividend hoax.

- **Awards**

- Insurance Service has received 2 Hammer Awards:
- Award Data Entry (ADE) team developed a replacement for an outdated, inefficient system that was used to process over 100,000 beneficiary claims per year.
- VA Insurance Service/Social Security Administration Partnership simplified processes used to update records and thereby ensuring record accuracy

Office of Field Operations

- Balanced Scorecard (GPRA)
- Field Re-organization (Area Office to OFO structure)
- Definition of HQ mission (Service Delivery - OFO; Demand Management - Services/Programs)
- Business Process Re-engineering/Case Management (Decision Review Officer, De Novo Review, Certification)
- Regional Loan Center consolidation
- Training, Responsibility, Involvement, Preparation
- Systematic Individual Performance Assessment
- STAR Review
- Pre-Discharge (Benefits Delivery at Discharge)
- Overseas Pre-Discharge (Benefits Delivery at Discharge)
- Virtual VA (Highway One)
- Network Support Centers
- Contract Exams (QTC project)
- Consolidation of HR Centers
- Consolidation of Education Processing
- Division Leadership and Management Training program
- Leadership Enhancement and Development program
- Information Technology Investment Board
- Data Integrity Teams
- Rewards and Recognition Program
- Executive Appraisal System (inclusion of peer assessment and 360 degree evaluation)
- NARS
- Case Call Routing
- Virtual Information Center
- Not Well Grounded Claims
- Tobacco Claims
- RBA 2000
- Map-D
- Roadmap to Excellence (Circle Meetings, Strategic Leadership Group, Hunt Valley)
- SDN Training Coordinators
- Enhanced Use
- Collocation (VHA/VBA)

- Capital Investment Process
- Veterans Benefits (satellite) Network
- Video-Conferencing
- Communities of Practice

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Office of Employee Development and Training

- Establishment of Veterans Benefits Training Academy
- Development/Deployment of Academy based VBA Training Programs
- Establishment of the Technical Training and Evaluation Staff
- Development/Deployment of the computer based Technical Performance Support System (TPSS) Training
- Veterans Benefits Network (VBN) Satellite System
- Video Conferencing System
- Opportunity Training Program
- SABA (Education Management System)
- Competency Profiles by National Computer Systems (NCS)
- Communities of Practice (COP)
- Leadership Enhancement and Development (LEAD) Training Program
- Service Delivery Network (SDN) Training Coordinators
- Information Technology (IT) Training
- HR Professional Development and Technical Training (SHRM) Certification
- Reader Focused Writing
- Hammer Award

Office of Information Management

- The Introduction of the Electronic Desktop
- Y2K



- Data Systems Redesign
 - VETSNET Architecture and Methodology
 - MAP
 - Data Sharing
- Infrastructure Redesign
 - Three Tier Architecture
 - Internet/Intranet
 - Open Systems with remote access
- Organizational Redesign
 - Employee/Contractor Transition
 - Functional Redesign
- Telecommunications Redesign
 - NARS -National Automated Response System (telephones)

Other

Reader Focused Writing/Plain Language Initiative