

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

November 29, 2018

The Honorable Robert Wilkie  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Wilkie:

We write today to address deeply troubling reports that Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) officials do not intend to reimburse veterans for acknowledged underpayment of benefits required by the law known as the Forever GI Bill. While we appreciate Undersecretary Paul Lawrence's comments at the House Veteran Affairs Committee hearing this morning indicating reimbursements would be forthcoming, we remain concerned about the serious impacts of persistent delays and continued uncertainty on our nation's veterans.

As veterans ourselves, these reports are deeply dismaying to us, and we urge you to work toward a swift solution that will not further jeopardize the educational pursuits, housing, or financial security of veterans and their families. Our nation's veterans have served our country with honor, often making incredible sacrifices to do so. It is imperative that we also honor our promises to them in return.

As you know, the Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017 (Public Law 115-48), also known as Forever GI Bill, was signed into law in 2017. Yet, since its effective date of August 1, 2018, veterans have withstood recurrent delays and financial losses as the agency struggled to update legacy IT systems to adequately account for the changes in law. In some cases, payments to beneficiaries were delayed up to two months causing problems as severe as eviction and inability to pay for basic needs such as food. Further, the second order losses suffered by veterans and their families – emotional stress, undeserved interest charges and overdraft fees, and educational and professional setbacks – cannot be made whole. This treatment of our nation's courageous veterans cannot continue.

It is imperative that the VA promptly address the technical problems contributing to these delays, provide veterans certainty in their planning, and restore veterans' trust that their earned benefits will be timely and wholly delivered.

We look forward to your prompt response and plans to address these concerning and persistent issues.

Sincerely,



Ruben Gallego  
Member of Congress



José E. Serrano  
Member of Congress



Tulsi Gabbard  
Member of Congress

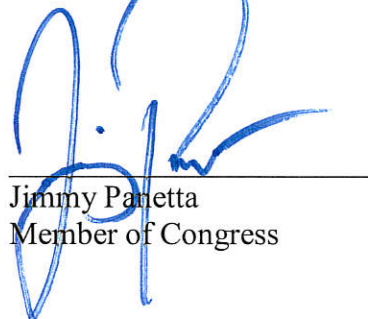
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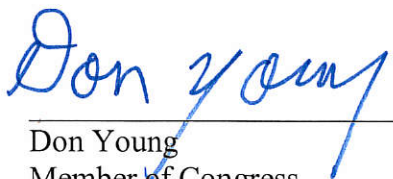
Bobby L. Rush  
Member of Congress



Chris Stewart  
Member of Congress



Jimmy Panetta  
Member of Congress



Don Young  
Member of Congress



Robert C. "Bobby" Scott  
Member of Congress