

THEODORE E. DEUTCH  
19TH DISTRICT, FLORIDA

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

COMMITTEE ON THE  
JUDICIARY



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August 3, 2012

Mr. David McLenachen  
Director, Pension and Fiduciary Service (21PF)  
810 Vermont Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20420

Mr. David McLenachen,

I write today to express my concerns with an ongoing dilemma facing the Department of Veterans Affairs that has seriously affected my home state. The VA's Fiduciary Program was established to assist vulnerable veterans whose mental or physical disabilities prevented them from making appropriate financial decisions. While I have no doubts that this program serves our veterans to the best of its abilities, in the recent months it has come to my attention that individuals in Florida are waiting an average of 75 days to have a guardian appointed to handle their financial matters and nearly 1,100 Florida veterans await the appointment of proper financial guardians.

Earlier this year VA Secretary Eric Shinseki assigned 10 new case managers in Florida to begin to alleviate some of the immense backlog, and I applaud his efforts and his goal of cutting the average wait time down to 45 days. While I understand these fiduciary cases require a thorough vetting process, a backlog of nearly 1,100 individuals is unacceptable. I do believe that the hiring of these new case managers will help to ease some of the ever growing backlog however, as we continue to withdraw thousands of troops from Iraq and Afghanistan, we must seize this opportunity to make changes to the current system to prevent similar issues in the future.

Currently to be approved as a fiduciary, one must go through a thorough vetting process including reviews of character witnesses and a criminal background check. This portion of the process can be quite time consuming and only lengthens the time in which a veteran must wait to be appointed a fiduciary. However, these critical screenings are similar to the process lawyers go through to be admitted to the Bar Association of their respective states. With the influx of returning soldiers and the desire of so many Americans to assist these veterans, I believe that we can attract many of these pre-screened individuals to take on fiduciary duties as pro bono work. Thus, I respectfully request that the VA consider a system that will allow these qualified persons to bypass the lengthy screening process and be appointed to serve veterans at a much swifter rate. With the proper system in place, we can reduce the backlog of fiduciary cases and attract eligible people to proudly serve the brave men and women that served on our behalf.

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I look forward to working with your office as new regulations are implemented that will improve the efficiency of the fiduciary approval process. I thank you for your commitment to our brave soldiers and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Theodore E. Deutch". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Theodore E. Deutch  
Member of Congress