



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

May 15, 2024

The Honorable Denis McDonough
Secretary
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Secretary McDonough:

From management of health and benefits records, to submission of claims for disability compensation and travel reimbursement, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) services should meet veterans where they are, however they need it. As the department works to modernize its information technology (IT) systems, it needs to ensure that veterans of all generations – and regardless of geography – are able to conveniently and securely access VA digital services.

Wisconsin's third congressional district is both highly rural and home to a large percentage of Korean and Vietnam-era veterans. As I recently raised in a committee hearing on access challenges facing rural veterans, where once Wisconsin veterans were able to simply verify and submit travel reimbursement claims via kiosk at VA facilities in my district, they now must do so online through the AccessVA and VA.gov portals. A part of this submission process includes a requirement for veterans to verify their identities through one of four VA sign-on options. While newer generations of veterans may be comfortable doing more online, for many who are less technologically inclined, have limited access to broadband internet or lack an internet-connected mobile device, this verification process can be difficult.

I understand that many federal agencies utilize the same identity verification providers in place at the VA and one of those, ID.me, also offers an in-person option that allows users to bring their documents to a designated location and work with a trained technician who can help them through the process. Veterans, too, should be empowered to choose from the most secure, federally compliant sign-on option that best suits their needs, technological capabilities, and personal preferences.

Within 30 days upon receipt of this letter, please provide an assessment of the VA's plans to improve and simplify the travel reimbursement claims process and implement this secure in-person verification option for veterans in Wisconsin.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "D. Van Orden". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and a stylized "V".

Derrick Van Orden
Member of Congress