

**From:** [Secor, Kevin](#)  
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**Attachments:** [Field Guide 07OCT13 FINAL.pdf](#)

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Over the last week, the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) has been relying on carryover funding to continue activities during the lapse in appropriations. However, at the close of business Monday, October 7 all of VBA's carryover funding will be exhausted (please see the VA's contingency plan for a lapse in appropriations [http://www.va.gov/opa/appropriations\\_lapse\\_plan.asp](http://www.va.gov/opa/appropriations_lapse_plan.asp)). Starting Tuesday, October 8, over 7,000 VBA employees will be put into furlough status, consistent with VA's contingency plan. Because of these furloughs, a number of services will be suspended, including: the Education Call Center; personal interviews and hearings at regional offices; educational and vocational counseling; outreach activities and programs, including those conducted at military facilities; and VetSuccess on Campus. The shutdown of public access to VBA facilities also affects Veterans Service Organizations with office space in VBA facilities, as public access to these VSOs is also suspended.

In addition, 2,754 Office of Information Technology (OIT) employees will also be furloughed Monday, October 7 as OIT's carryover balances will be exhausted. All development of VA software will cease, including work on the Veterans Benefits Management System (VBMS), the system critically important to reducing the backlog of disability claims.

Consistent with applicable law, VA identified functions and services that will continue during the lapse in appropriations. VA determined that claims processing actions necessary to the payment of compensation, pension, education, and vocational rehabilitation and employment benefits will continue until VA's remaining mandatory funds for these programs are exhausted, which is projected to happen in late October. Claims processors will be on duty during their normal work day only. Although, prior to the lapse in appropriations, VBA had extended mandatory overtime for claims processors until November 16, overtime has ceased during the lapse.

VBA can continue to employ staff in its compensation and pension Call Centers. Individual Veterans can still initiate claims or check on the status of a claim by dialing 1-800-827-1000.

In addition, please note that VBA's home loan guaranty and life insurance programs will continue operation during the appropriations lapse. However, Veterans seeking approval of VA home loans may be impacted, as access to Internal Revenue Service data used by private-sector lenders to verify income may not be available.

Given the staff reduction and in order to focus limited resources on providing essential services to Veterans and their families, VBA will be unable to respond to congressional inquiries at both VBA Headquarters and regional offices. Congressional inquiries include responding to constituent and legislative questions from Congressional members and their staffs. VBA will resume suspended public contact activities, including accepting and responding to congressional inquiries, as soon as possible following enactment of appropriations.

The Department of Veterans Affairs Field Shutdown Guide ([http://www.va.gov/opa/appropriations\\_lapse\\_plan.asp](http://www.va.gov/opa/appropriations_lapse_plan.asp)) outlines the impact of the appropriations lapse on VA activities.



# VETERANS FIELD GUIDE

## TO GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

### Services to Veterans **not impacted** by a lapse in appropriations

#### All VA medical facilities and clinics will remain fully operational, including:

1. Inpatient Care
  2. Outpatient Care
  3. Prescriptions
  4. Surgeries
  5. Dental Treatment
  6. Extended Care
  7. Mental Health Care
  8. Nursing Home Care
  9. Special Health Care Services for Women Veterans
  10. Vet Centers
- Military Sexual Trauma Counseling
  - Readjustment Counseling Services (Vet Centers)
  - Interments in National Cemeteries will continue, but may be on a reduced schedule. Contact NCA's Scheduling Office at 1-800-535-1117
  - My HealtheVet – All Services

- Claims processing and payments in the compensation, pension, education, and vocational rehabilitation programs are anticipated to continue through late October. However, in the event of a prolonged shutdown, claims processing and payments in these programs would be suspended when available funding is exhausted
- NCA will process applications for headstones, markers, medallions
- Insurance Processing
- Home Loan Processing
- NCA will notify VBA of death for benefit actions
- VBA Call Centers will be operational except for education
- Acquisitions Logistics Center will accept and fill prosthetics supply orders
- Office of Small and Disadvantaged Small Businesses
- Veterans Crisis Line

#### Operational National Phone Numbers for Veterans

- **VA National Call Center:** 1-800-827-1000
- **All VA Medical Facilities & Services:** (411 or [http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/division\\_flash.asp?dnum=1](http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/division_flash.asp?dnum=1))
- **Coaching into Care Call Center for Family Members of Veterans:** 1-888-823-7458
- **Debt Management Center: (Collection of Non-Medical Debts):** 1-800-827-0648
- **Homeless Prevention Line:** 1-877-4AID VET (877-424-3838)
- **Home Loans:** 1-888-244-6711
- **Insurance:** 1-800-669-8477
- **Mammography Helpline:** 1-888-492-7844
- **Meds by Mail:** 1-888-385-0235 (or) 1-866-229-7389
- **National Caregiver Support Line:** 1-855-260-3274
- **NCA's Scheduling Office:** 1-800-535-1117
- **Veterans Crisis Line:** 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- **Women Veterans Call Center:** 1-855-VA-WOMEN (1-855-829-6636)
- **Federal Service for the Deaf:** 711
- **Vet Center Combat Call Center:** 1-877-WAR-VETS
- **Discrimination:** 1-888-737-3361
- **Denver Acquisition and Logistics Center:** 1-303-273-6200
- **Health Benefits Customer Service:** 1-877-222-VETS (8387).
- **CHAMPVA:** 1-800-733-8387
- **Children of Women Vietnam Veterans; Foreign Medical Program; Spina Bifida Health Care Program:** 1-877-345-8179 (or) 1-888-820-1756



Updated Oct. 7, 2013

# Services to Veterans impacted by a lapse in appropriations

## VA call centers and hotlines that will cease to function include:

1. VBA Education Call Center **1-888-442-4551**
2. Inspector General Hotline suspended **1-800-488-8244**
3. Consumer Affairs (consumeraffairs@va.gov; VA's home page "Contact Us" function and **202-461-7402** will be suspended)
4. Congressional Liaison Veterans queries suspended

- VBA Regional Offices public contact services will not be available
- VBA's processing of appeals and remands will be suspended. In the event of a prolonged shutdown, no decisions on appeals or motions will be issued by the Board of Veterans Appeals, and no Board field hearings on appeals will be held
- Freedom of Information Act queries will not be processed
- Privacy Act requests will not be processed
- VA's homepage (www.va.gov) will be updated intermittently
- VA's main and hospital Social Media Web sites will be updated intermittently (Facebook, Twitter, Blog, etc.)
- Recruiting and hiring of Veteran job applicants will cease with the exception of the Veterans Health Administration
- Presidential Memorial certificates will not be processed
- Interments at National Cemeteries will be conducted on a reduced schedule
- Military services coordinator operations will be suspended, including overseas
- VA Secretary correspondence with Veterans and VSOs suspended
- Outreach and Public Awareness Activities
- VetSuccess on Campus suspended
- Vocational Rehabilitation and Education Counseling will be limited
- VBA will not be able to continue overtime for claims processors
- Claims processing and payments in the compensation, pension, education, and vocational rehabilitation programs are anticipated to continue through late October. However, in the event of a prolonged shutdown, claims processing and payments in these programs would be suspended when available funding is exhausted

## Suspended National Phone Numbers

- **Education Benefits:** 1-888-442-4551
- **Consumer Affairs:** 202-461-7402
- **Inspector General Hotline:** 1-800-488-8244
- **Special Issues:** Gulf War/Agent Orange/Project SHAD/Mustard Agents and Lewisite/Ionizing Radiation  
1-800-749-8387
- **Status of Headstones and Markers:**  
1-800-697-6947
- **Whistle Blower Reprisal:** 1-800-872-9855

**In the event of a prolonged shutdown, VA will continue to review and update its plan in conjunction with the applicable legal requirements and circumstances. Full Contingency Plan located at [http://www.va.gov/opa/docs/VA\\_Contingency\\_Plan\\_Document\\_20130927.pdf](http://www.va.gov/opa/docs/VA_Contingency_Plan_Document_20130927.pdf)**