

Ranking Member Richard Burr

Burr Opening Statement at the State-of-the-Art IT Solutions for VA Benefits Delivery Hearing

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and welcome to our witnesses. I appreciate you all being here today to discuss the important topic of how we can improve benefits delivery for our nation's veterans.

One of the Department of Veterans Affairs' most important missions is to provide timely and appropriate benefits to veterans and their families. Yet, for far too long, VA's claims processing system has been challenged by large backlogs and long delays.

We are all well aware of what these challenges mean for veterans back home. In North Carolina I frequently hear how frustrated veterans are with this long, confusing process.

Over the years, a patchwork approach has been tried to improve the claims processing system, and yet the problems and frustrations continue. I believe that more fundamental changes are necessary, and state-of-the-art IT solutions must be part of that change.

Our nation continues to welcome home our newest generation of veterans. Many of these courageous men and women are used to cutting edge technologies. In fact, many have not known life without computers. VA's benefits system must begin to make the necessary changes to meet 21st century demands.

By moving to a paperless benefits system, my hope is that we can reduce the inefficiencies in the claims process, lessen the frustrations of veterans and their families, and better enable veterans to access their benefits.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today about VA's progress in moving away from the paper-based claims process to an electronic system that will better serve our veterans.

VA's electronic health records are a prime example of the incredible benefit that state-of-the-art information technology can yield. I hope that veterans can soon benefit from a modern, electronic system for benefits as well.

Also, I hope that VA will draw from the many lessons it has learned over the years to make sure that implementation of the Post-9/11 GI bill goes smoothly. The last thing our veterans need, after sacrificing so much for our nation, is to encounter confusion, frustration, or delay in accessing their hard earned education benefits. We owe them much more than that. So, I look forward to hearing from today's witnesses about how VA will have this program up and running by August 1st.

Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you for holding this important hearing. I stand ready to work with you and the other members of this committee to promote a benefits delivery system that will serve our veterans well.

I thank the Chair.