

states of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. As a result, operations at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Regional Offices in New Orleans, Louisiana, and Jackson, Mississippi, were interrupted. Additionally, postal services in the affected regions have been interrupted. As a result of the interruptions, correspondence containing claims, information, or evidence sent to the affected VA Regional Offices is likely to be interrupted. VA wishes to protect the claimants who send correspondence to the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) through the normal channels of communication from being deprived of benefits solely because those channels of communication have been disrupted due to events outside of the claimants' control. Therefore, VA is instituting procedures to consider alternative dates as the date of receipt of correspondence.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Maya Ferrandino, Consultant, Compensation and Pension Service, Policy and Regulations Staff (211D), Veterans Benefits Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs, 810 Vermont Avenue, NW., Washington, DC 20420, (202) 273-7211.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: A VA regulation allows the Under Secretary for Benefits to establish exceptions to VA's rule about date of receipt of claims, information, or evidence. Ordinarily, "date of receipt," means the date on which a claim, information, or evidence was received in a VA office. The regulation states that exceptions may be established when a natural or man-made interference with the normal channels through which VA ordinarily receives correspondence has resulted in one or more VA Regional Offices experiencing extended delays in receipt of claims, information, or evidence to an extent that, if not addressed, would adversely affect such claimants through no fault of their own. The full regulation can be found at 38 CFR 3.1(r).

On August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina came through the states of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. As a result, operations at VA's Regional Offices in New Orleans, Louisiana, and Jackson, Mississippi, were interrupted. Additionally, postal services in the affected regions, including parts of Alabama, have been interrupted.

As a result of the interruptions, correspondence containing claims, information, or evidence sent to the affected VA Regional Offices has been significantly interrupted. Because the New Orleans Regional Office was closed, VA established that mail addressed there would be forwarded by

the U.S. Postal Service to the Muskogee Regional Office in Oklahoma. In addition, claimants and beneficiaries in Louisiana have been instructed to send their correspondence to the Muskogee Regional Office.

VA wishes to prevent claimants and beneficiaries who send correspondence to VA from being deprived of benefits because the mail service has been disrupted due to events outside of their control. We have therefore established the following exceptions to the standard rule on date of receipt.

Exceptions to Date of Receipt for Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) hereby gives notice that for purposes of determining the date of entitlement, any correspondence received by the New Orleans Regional Office (or by the Muskogee Regional Office from Louisiana), the Jackson Regional Office, or the Montgomery Regional Office, which contains claims, information, or evidence will be considered received on the date the claimant or beneficiary (or representative) signed the correspondence. If there is no dated signature on the correspondence, then the correspondence will be considered received on the date it was postmarked.

This exception is effective for correspondence received by the New Orleans Regional Office (or by the Muskogee Regional Office from Louisiana) from August 29, 2005 through October 27, 2005.

This exception is effective for correspondence received by the Jackson Regional Office or the Montgomery Regional Office from August 29, 2005 through September 27, 2005.

Approved: October 17, 2005.

R. James Nicholson,

Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

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DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Performance Review Board Members

AGENCY: Department of Veterans Affairs.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: Under the provisions of 5 U.S.C. 4314(c)(4) agencies are required to publish a notice in the **Federal Register** of the appointment of Performance Review Board (PRB) members. This notice updates the VA Performance Review Board of the Department of Veterans Affairs that was

published in the **Federal Register** on October 7, 2005 (70 FR 58793)).

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 24, 2005.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Charlotte Moment, Office of Human Resources Management (052B), Department of Veterans Affairs, 810 Vermont Avenue, NW., Washington, DC 20420, (202) 273-8165.

VA Performance Review Board (PRB)

R. Allen Pittman, Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration (Chairperson).

Claude M. Kicklighter, Chief of Staff.
Thomas G. Bowman, Deputy Chief of Staff (Alternate).

Sharon K. Barnes, Executive Secretary.
Edward F. Meagher, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Information Technology Management.

Ronald R. Aument, Deputy Under Secretary for Benefits, Veterans Benefits Administration.

Michael Walcoff, Associate Deputy Under Secretary for Operations, Veterans Benefits Administration (Alternate).

Michael J. Kussman, M.D., Deputy Under Secretary for Health, Veterans Health Administration.

Dennis M. Lewis, Acting Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Operations and Management, Veterans Health Administration (Alternate).

John H. Thompson, Deputy General Counsel.

Rita Reed, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Budget.

Jon A. Wooditch, Deputy Inspector General.

Richard Wannemacher, Jr., Acting Under Secretary, National Cemetery Administration.

Veterans Benefits Administration PRB

Ronald R. Aument, Deputy Under Secretary for Benefits, (Chairperson).

Geraldine V. Breakfield, Associate Deputy Under Secretary for Management.

Jack F. McCoy, Associate Deputy Under Secretary for Policy & Program Management.

Michael Walcoff, Associate Deputy Under Secretary for Field Operations.

James Bohmbach, Chief Financial Officer.

Diana M. Rubens, Director, Western Area Office.

Thomas Bowman, Deputy Chief of Staff, Office of the Secretary.

Veterans Health Administration PRB

Michael J. Kussman, MD, Chair, Deputy Under Secretary for Health.

Dennis M. Lewis, Vice-Chair, Acting Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Operations and Management.

Linda W. Belton, Network Director,
VISN 11.
Everett A. Chasen, Chief
Communications Officer.
Jeanette A. Chirico-Post, MD, Network
Director, VISN 1.
William F. Feeley, Network Director,
VISN 2.
Barbara B. Fleming, MD, PhD, Chief
Quality and Performance Officer.
Arthur S. Hamerschlag, VHA Chief of
Staff.
Robert M. Kolodner, MD, Associate
Chief Information Officer.
Robert E. Lynch, MD, Network Director,
VISN 16.
Jimmy A. Norris, Chief Financial
Officer.
Robert A. Petzel, MD, Network Director,
VISN 23.

Catherine J. Rick, RN, MSN, Chief
Nursing Officer.
Patricia Vandenberg, Assistant Deputy
Under Secretary for Health for Policy
and Planning.
Linda F. Watson, Network Director,
VISN 7.
Nevin M. Weaver, Director,
Management Support Office (Ex
Officio).
Robert L. Wiebe, MD, Network Director,
VISN 21.
Mark E. Shelhorse, Acting Chief
Consultant, Mental Health Strategic
Health Care Group.
Dennis Duffy, Acting Assistant
Secretary for Policy, Planning, and
Preparedness.

Office of Inspector General PRB

Stephen J. Cossu, Assistant Inspector
General for Investigations,
Department of Labor.

Michael P. Stephens, Deputy Inspector
General, Department of Housing and
Urban Development, Office of
Inspector General.

R. Joe Haban, Assistant Inspector
General for Investigations,
Department of Health and Human
Services, Office of Inspector General.

Dated: October 18, 2005.

R. James Nicholson,

Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

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