

April 18, 2017

The Honorable Johnny Isakson  
Chairman  
Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jon Tester  
Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Isakson and Ranking Member Tester:

I am writing today in support of S. 152, the *Department of Veterans Affairs Appeals Modernization Act*, and to urge you to schedule it for a hearing before the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs so that we can begin the process of moving the bill through the legislative process and onto the President for his signature to become law.

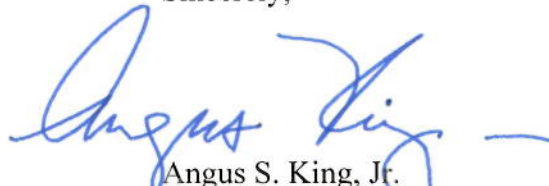
As you are both well aware, today, there are currently more than 450,000 appeals cases pending nationwide, mired in the bureaucratic limbo of a system that has not been updated since the administration of President Franklin Roosevelt in the 1930s. The sad result of this red tape debacle is a growing collection of veterans from across Maine and the nation who may have been denied the benefits they are entitled to and have rightfully earned. As one Maine veteran once conveyed to me: "It seems as if the VA is just kicking the can down the road until I kick the bucket." This process is failing our veterans and every day that we do not take action to rectify this problem is a day that we have failed them as well.

Moreover, what should come as even more of a wake-up call to Congress is a recent report released by the U.S. Government Accountability Office, which warns that, unless action is taken, veterans may have to wait an astounding 8.5 years on average for their appeals to be resolved. As I am sure you can agree, this is an unconscionable and unacceptable way to treat those who have served our nation honorably and bravely.

As you both know, the *Department of Veterans Affairs Appeals Modernization Act*, which I have cosponsored, is a non-controversial bill that would overhaul the VA's broken appeals process to give veterans clearer and more timely options after receiving an initial appeals decision from the VA. The legislation is the product of extensive collaboration between lawmakers, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and Veterans Service Organizations. As a result of that cooperation, it has garnered bipartisan, bicameral support and has been backed by Disabled American Veterans, the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Paralyzed Veterans of America, AMVETS, the Military Officers Association of America, the National Association of County Veterans Services Officers and others. In an institution that is too often paralyzed by partisanship, this bill represents a real opportunity to take common-sense action that will yield significant benefits to the people we represent – to those who have sacrificed and served for our country.

Thus, I hope that we can work in an expeditious manner to move this consensus bill forward. As I said when this bill was first introduced, justice delayed is justice denied. It is time to stop delaying and it's time to finally modernize this process to ensure that our veterans get the benefits they deserve. I urge the Committee to hold a hearing on the *Department of Veterans Affairs Appeals Modernization Act* so that the Senate can move to passage of the bill.

Sincerely,



Angus S. King, Jr.  
United States Senator