

Decision Notices Confuse Veterans

VA-issued notices identical except for conditions

With claimants already frustrated with waiting for decisions and long application review times, a new problem has been arriving in the mailboxes of veterans and VA disability attorneys. Recently, multiple decision letters have been sent to claimants and their attorneys that are seemingly identical except for the condition they address.

Multiple decision letters are being sent to the same claimant listing the same date of decision, but each letter contains decisions on different conditions. To make matters worse, the letters sometimes arrive days apart, giving time for a claimant or their attorney to file an appeal on the decision, only to get another decision letter for a different condition days later.

These multiple decision letters are a problem not only for unrepresented claimants, but also veterans who have legal representation. Even experienced VA disability attorneys can be frustrated by multiple decision letters as they create the need to submit multiple appeal applications.

A secondary problem with multiple decision letters is that future correspondence regarding these decisions typically cites only the decision date, and not the specific condition. When you have multiple conditions addressed in multiple decision letters all on a single date, it can be difficult to determine which condition or appeal the VA is contacting you about. The more confusion, the longer approval can take.



More VA Correspondence Problems

The first decision made in your VA disability claim is known as a rating decision, which can take anywhere from 6 months to 1 year to receive. This decision notice is generally short and does not go into great detail about how they arrived at the decision.

What many claimants are finding issues with is that their rating decisions often come in multiple letters, but all dated the same. One decision may be a percentage of approval, while another may be a denial of a condition.

A VA Disability Attorney Can Help

The methods in which the VA handles decision letters can be confusing to anyone. To avoid frustration, have legal representation ready at your side to help you make sense of the decisions made on your VA disability claim. The Law Offices of LaVan & Neidenberg, P.A. are here to help.

Our firm has helped thousands of veterans file and appeal their disability claims so they can get the medical and financial help they deserve.

To learn more about the VA disability claims process and your options, [request a free copy of our ebook, *Don't Panic: Win Your VA Disability Claim*](#). To schedule a no cost case evaluation, [contact us today](#) – **1-888-234-5758**.

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Threats Grow Against SSA Judges

Disability case judges receiving violent threats

With a wait list that stretches over 1 year in some cases, a growing number of angry Social Security disability claimants have been taking their frustrations to extremes.

Courtroom Threats

In a recent report submitted to the Association of Administrative Law Judges, there have been at least 80 documented threats to kill or harm administrative law judges in 2010. This is an 18% increase from last year, but also comes with an increase in cases overall.

Administrative law judges may hear several Social Security disability benefit appeals in one day, and the volume of cases continues to grow. Applicants who are denied their benefits during the application process are allowed to seek reconsideration and appeals. Because many claimants are heavily dependant on their disability benefits, a negative decision can cause additional frustration. In a few of these cases, that frustration has led to verbal threats against the deciding judge.

With about 1,400 administrative law judges handling Social Security disability claim appeals at over 150 offices across the country, security concerns are increasing. While many judges hear cases within a courtroom, many cases are heard in leased office spaces which sometimes lack the heightened security of a courthouse. Fortunately, none of the threats have been carried out to the knowledge of the Social Security Administration.

Growing Frustration from Claimants

The increase in Social Security disability claims has long been tied to an increase in unemployment, the economy, and an aging population. Many people who would not normally consider themselves disabled are applying for benefits when unemployment pay isn't meeting their needs.

More of these types of claims mean more denials, and more appeals, which all boils down to more cases to be heard in front of judges. When claimants are at their wits end, they sometimes lash out at the judges, who are seen as the final solution to their financial troubles.

Avoiding Appeals and Courtrooms

The best way to handle the process of applying for Social Security disability benefits is to work closely with an experienced Social Security disability attorney. Your initial application will be filed by a skilled attorney who knows the evidentiary requirements for your disability. By providing solid documentation early in the process, you can hopefully avoid many of the review delays and have a better chance at approval.

DISABILITY SERVICE NEWS

NEW VA CALL CENTER OPENS IN VEGAS

Las Vegas, Nevada will become home to 1 of 7 new call centers designed to improve the Veterans' Affairs' programs. The 50,000 sq. ft. facility will create 400 new jobs that will handle many business matters for the VA, especially related to the Consolidated Patient Account Center program. The CPAC program merges billings and collection activities and will help expand the services and programs currently offered to veterans.

The new facility comes at a time when the local economy of Southeastern Las Vegas could use the help. With a 15% unemployment rate in August of 2010, the new center will create more job opportunities for the area. Veterans in the western U.S. will also see an increase in VA services thanks to the new support of the center, and other areas will soon see the same as the other 6 centers are developed.

UCF OPENS VETERANS ACADEMIC RESOURCE CENTER

The University of Central Florida (UCF) recently opened a new Veterans Academic Resource Center (VARC) to help veterans and their dependants who attend classes at the university. With almost 1,000 veterans attending classes at UCF each semester the services cover all aspects of college enrollment from initial application to academic help, career advising, tutoring, disability accommodations, and more.

The center is located in a 3,400 sq. ft. space with a lounge area, study rooms, and staff offices. The goal of the center is to create a collaborative one-stop resource for veteran students and their dependants. Multiple university departments can be accessed at once through the center to get the veterans the services they need to transition from military service to a civilian collegiate lifestyle.

A virtual version of the VARC is being developed for veterans attending one of UCF's satellite campuses. The project is being funded by a \$367,000 grant from the Department of Education and UCF is the only public university in Florida to receive such a grant.

UCF continues to be one of the many universities recognized for continued support of veteran students.

An experienced Social Security disability attorney from the Law Offices of LaVan & Neidenberg can be your voice in the courtroom if you need to appeal a Social Security disability benefit claim denial. Having your attorney with you at an appeals hearing can help decrease the frustration experienced during these proceedings.

Let an attorney from LaVan & Neidenberg help bring a resolution to your Social Security disability benefits claim. To schedule a no cost case evaluation, [contact us today](#) – 1-888-234-5758.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

THE LAVAN FAMILY WELCOMES A NEW MEMBER!

Just in time for the holidays, Kenneth LaVan and his wife welcomed their first child into the world on November 29th! Alexander Eli LaVan was born at 10:26 a.m. weighing 7 lbs. 6 oz. and 20 inches long. Both mom and newborn are doing well – look for baby updates in future issues!



As 2010 closes in upon us, snow begins to blanket much of the northern U.S. and the holidays kick into full gear!

HANUKKAH –DECEMBER 1 – DECEMBER 9, 2010

This Jewish holiday commemorates the rededication of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem during the Maccabean Revolt in 2nd century BCE. Hanukkah festivities involve 8 nights of lighting the Menorah candelabrum to symbolize the miracle burning of the lamp oil in the temple.

PEARL HARBOR DAY – TUESDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2010

A day of remembrance for those lost in the dawn attack on the Pearl Harbor U.S. Naval base. Over 2,400 American servicemen and 68 civilians were killed in the bombing by Japanese troops.

CHRISTMAS DAY– SATURDAY, DECEMBER 25, 2010

A Christian holiday celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ, this day is modernly celebrated with themed decorations, gift-giving, and family dinners. The night prior many families attend midnight mass at their local church for choir performances and prayer.

SIGN OUR PETITION FOR FREE MEDICAL RECORDS!

LaVan & Neidenberg is sponsoring a petition to change medical records fees in the State of Florida. Currently, patients are required to pay up to \$1 per page to obtain a copy of their own medical records. The Firm's legislative initiative proposes to **make medical records FREE for all individuals applying for disability benefits.**

Please join us in our fight and [sign our petition](#) today! Thank you for your support!

New Program Reaches Out to Vets

Florida Vets Connect seeks to alert veterans of the available programs.

A new initiative created by Chief Financial Officer Alex Sink's office is seeking to reach out to Florida veterans who may not be aware of the assistance available to them.

Giving Veterans What They Deserve

This is a positive turn of events for the VA, which is often the subject of frustration for many veterans. The new outreach program is designed to bolster current efforts to inform deserving veterans of their unclaimed benefits. As of June 2010 the department has been able to contact nearly 30,000 of the 1.6 million Florida veterans to inform them of benefits and assistance they are missing out on. This contact was done through e-mail, a service which many veterans still do not utilize or have regular access to.

ID Applicants Screened for Veteran Status

The Florida Vets Connect program works with the Florida driver's license and ID system to identify and locate veterans. Those who identify themselves as a veteran when renewing their driver's license or state ID card will now be contacted by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to inform them of benefits and programs they are eligible for.

The program is also seeking sources of funding to finance the \$8,000 in mailing costs to get letters of notice to veterans without e-mail access and who may not be renewing a license or ID in the near future.

Locating All of Florida's Veterans

The state currently has accurate contact information for about 700,000 veterans, accounting for only 44% of the veteran population. After the VA department outreach, many veterans admitted they were unaware of their benefits, including disability and pensions. Reports from the Veterans of Foreign Wars Magazine estimates that **more than \$22 billion in pension funds go unclaimed each year** across the nation.

At the Law Offices of LaVan and Neidenberg we help disabled veterans apply and appeal for all of the available benefits and services available to them. For a no-cost review of your claim and help with determining all of the benefits you are entitled to, request a copy of our [free disability claim guide](#).

Or, [contact us today](#) to have a VA disability attorney review your claim – 1-888-234-5758.

Holiday Hijinks at LaVan & Neidenberg

The law firm celebrated Halloween & Thanksgiving in style!

Serving our clients is top priority for the staff at the Law Offices of LaVan & Neidenberg, P.A. As a reward for all the hard work and dedication the fine men and women put in every day, some celebrations are in order!

In October we held a Halloween festival complete with a department decorating, costume, and pumpkin decorating contest, as well as traditional Halloween treats!

We couldn't let Thanksgiving escape us either this year and asked that our staff roll up their sleeves to provide a tasty pre-Thanksgiving dish to get everyone in the spirit to chow down! With 10 departments and over 80 employees providing appetizers, side dishes, main dishes and desserts, it was a feast to behold!

We hope you and your family had a spooky safe Halloween and a delicious Thanksgiving. Keep an eye out next month for our Holiday party report.



No carving needed when you're decorated to win!



First Place Winners – the VA Department and their military-themed décor and costumes!

A tie for 2nd place between...



the "Crazy Circus" in Accounts Receivable...



and "LaVan Mental Ward" in the Case Developers department!



The delicious spread at Thanksgiving (this was only 2/3 of what we had for food, AND there was a dessert table!)