

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 19, 2013

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

With partisan politics threatening another government shutdown, we respectfully request that you prioritize the care and well-being of our nation's brave veterans by deeming certain U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs employees as "essential." The men and women who have served our nation so honorably do not deserve to have the quality benefits, programs, and facilities they've earned jeopardized by a potential government shutdown.

While we're still hopeful a bipartisan consensus can be reached to avert a government shutdown, the impact of a shutdown on veterans with new or pending medical claims will likely mean additional delays in adjudication. This will, in turn, cause the massive claims backlog that we have pressed the Department of Veterans Affairs to reduce to again worsen, in addition to halting forward momentum on this issue. We can't allow this to happen.

We are also concerned that veterans seeking to further their education by taking advantage of the G.I. Bill will encounter delays that could cause them to miss enrollment deadlines. Again, an interruption affecting the personnel who are responsible for processing veteran's eligibility for this hard-earned benefit can potentially have consequences on the long-term educational and economic success of our nation's heroes, many of whom are supporting families while also working towards their degree.

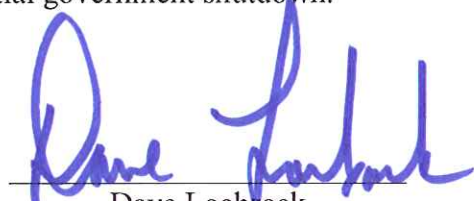
In addition to benefits delays, public outreach programs and services that are vital resources for our veterans may also be suspended. Some of these services, like the National Center for PTSD, are potentially lifesaving resources for those who have served in combat. After risking their lives for their country, those with both external and internal injuries shouldn't suffer interruption of the quality care our nation has pledged to give them because some in Congress have opted to put politics before people.

Mr. President, as we continue to work toward a responsible solution that will enable our government to be funded beyond the end of this month, we ask that you'll consider our request. Deeming certain U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs employees as "essential" will enable our nation to keep our promises to veteran constituents by protecting their services and giving them the certainty they deserve in spite of a potential government shutdown.


Sincerely,



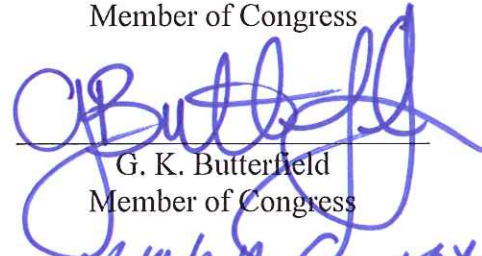
Cheri Bustos
Member of Congress



Dave Loebsack
Member of Congress




Bill Foster
Member of Congress



G. K. Butterfield
Member of Congress



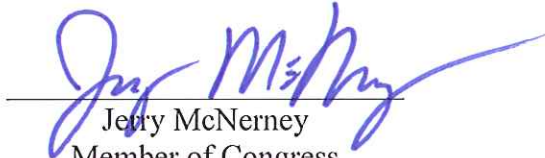
Paul Tonko
Member of Congress



Matthew A. Cartwright
Member of Congress



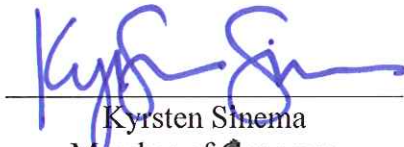
Patrick Murphy
Member of Congress



Jerry McNerney
Member of Congress



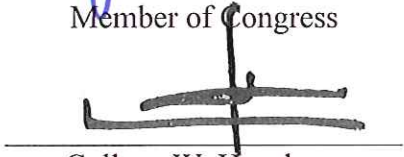
John Garamendi
Member of Congress



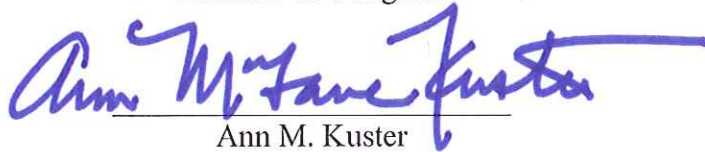
Kyrsten Sinema
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C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger
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Colleen W. Hanabusa
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Ann M. Kuster
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Scott Peters
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