



California Department
of Veterans Affairs

District Offices

February 24, 2025

(CVSO Conference Presentation by the District Managers)

Agenda

- District Office (DO) Data and Reminders
 - CDCR Liaison Program
 - DO-Reviewed VetPro Claims
 - BVA Hearings
- Board Data for CalVet-Represented Appeals
- 38 CFR 20.1304 Change in Representation
- Higher Level Review and Claims Accuracy Request

Last 7 slides shows staff list and POC's for the District Offices

District Office CDCR Liaison Program

	Claims Filed	VAEs held	In-Person Interviews	Letters to veterans	Retro	Adjusted Monthly	Full Monthly Entitlement
Jan-Mar 2024	94	140	99	185	\$ 71,306	\$ 13,132	\$ 33,888
Apr-Jun 2024	164	83	121	205	\$ 83,276	\$ 14,618	\$ 37,415
Jul-Sep 2024	126	85	122	369	\$ 55,565	\$ 18,793	\$ 38,542
Oct-Dec 2024	115	72	135	275	\$ 127,748	\$ 11,794	\$ 20,288
2024 Total	499	380	477	1034	\$337,899	\$ 58,337	\$ 130,134

For correspondence regarding claims assistance coming from veterans incarcerated at state prisons:

→ Please forward them to appropriate CalVet District Office representative or point-of-contact.

	CalVet Representative	State Prisons
<u>Oakland DO</u> Liz Hargrove-Washington	Sofia Martin Del Campo	Mule Creek State Prison, CSP Sacramento, Folsom State Prison, High Desert State Prison, Pelican Bay State Prison
	Mary Donovan	California Medical Facility, CSP Solano, San Quentin Rehabilitation Center
	Daryl Neff	Avenal State Prison, CA Health Care Facility, Correctional Training Facility, Pleasant Valley State Prison, Salinas Valley State Prison
	Tera Ireland	CSP Corcoran, CA Substance Abuse Treatment Facility, Central CA Women's Facility (Chowchilla), Valley State Prison Chowchilla, Sierra Conservation Center
<u>Los Angeles DO</u> Alberto Alpasan	Matthew Grimm	CA Correctional Institution, CA Men's Colony, Kern Valley State Prison, North Kern State Prison, Wasco State Prison
	Sandra Matrecitos (temporary assignment)	CA Institution for Men, CA Institution for Women, CA Rehabilitation Center, CA State Prison LA
<u>San Diego DO</u> Melaina Anker-Youngberg	Roberto Avila	Calipatria State Prison, Centinela State Prison, Ironwood State Prison, Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility

District Office Reviewed Electronic Claims

	Oakland DO	Los Angeles DO	San Diego DO
Jan-Mar 2024	4643	5295	1575
Apr-Jun 2024	4803	5773	1934
Jul-Sep 2024	5331	5474	2534
Oct-Dec 2024	5725	4908	2936
2024 TOTAL	20,502	21,450	8,979

D.O. Reviewed Electronic Claims

Returned Claims %	Jan-Mar 2024	Apr-Jun 2024	Jul-Sep 2024	Oct-Dec 2024
Oakland District Office	8%	7%	9%	9%
Los Angeles District Office	10%	10%	9.6%	9.5%
San Diego District Office	13%	7%	3%	6%

D.O. Reviewer Reminders

VA Form 21-526ez	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No bank account? Please include the FS1201W, <i>Request for Payment of Federal Benefits by Check</i>, with their VA Form 21-526ez.• VAF 21-526EZ marked as FDC, but should be marked Standard. Original claim where veteran separated over 1 year, and there is no private medical evidence, no VAF 21-4142 included, nor VA HCS listed on form.
VA Form 21-22	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Switching from a private agent or attorney without the termination of representation/fee letter.• Missing signatures – more often it's the VSO signature that's missing.
VA Form 20-0995	Box 29C blank when signed by VSO.
Zip Code	Missing zip code in VetPro – not on the form, it's missing on Veteran's Personal Information page.

D.O. Reviewer Reminders

Package Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unsigned or unsaved forms show up as blank forms for DO Reviewer.• Transposed Social Security numbers, and even names.• Sloppy scans – skewed forms or pages not in order. Those need manual review instead of mail automation action.• Scanned in VP but not attached to claim package (i.e. DD214).
Dependents	Best practice for adding spouse or biological child, and veteran is tech-able, suggest submission online at www.va.gov . Manual dependency claims are currently taking over 230 days to process.

District Offices BVA Hearings

	Oakland DO	Los Angeles DO	San Diego DO
Jan-Mar 2024	64	69	27
Apr-Jun 2024	100	87	31
Jul-Sep 2024	116	74	36
Oct-Dec 2024	113	64	23
CY 2024 Total	393	294	117

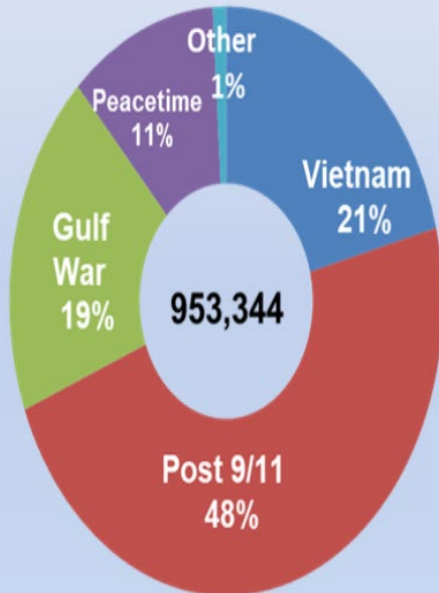
- Please reach out to us if the appellant reaches out to you. Remember, even when we are notified early, we still have to work our cases according to the hearing date.
- If you are hosting the virtual hearing in your office, let us know if rep will stay with appellant. We need to notify BVA Coordinator and Judge that there is an observer.

Veterans Affairs Claims Backlog

Characteristics of Claims

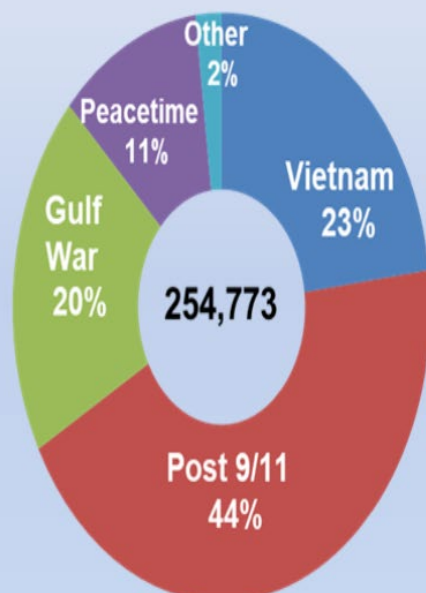
https://benefits.va.gov/REPORTS/characteristics_of_claims.asp

Total Pending Claims



Data as of: 02/01/25

Total Backlogged Claims



Backlog: Claims pending longer than 125 days

Over 250K backlogged claims right now.

- Remember that every follow-up we send to VA, is another action they need to address.

Priority Processing Requests (VAF 20-10207)

- Homeless or at risk of being homeless
- Experiencing financial hardship
- Diagnosed with ALS
- Very seriously injured/ill during military service
- Former POW
- 85 years old or older

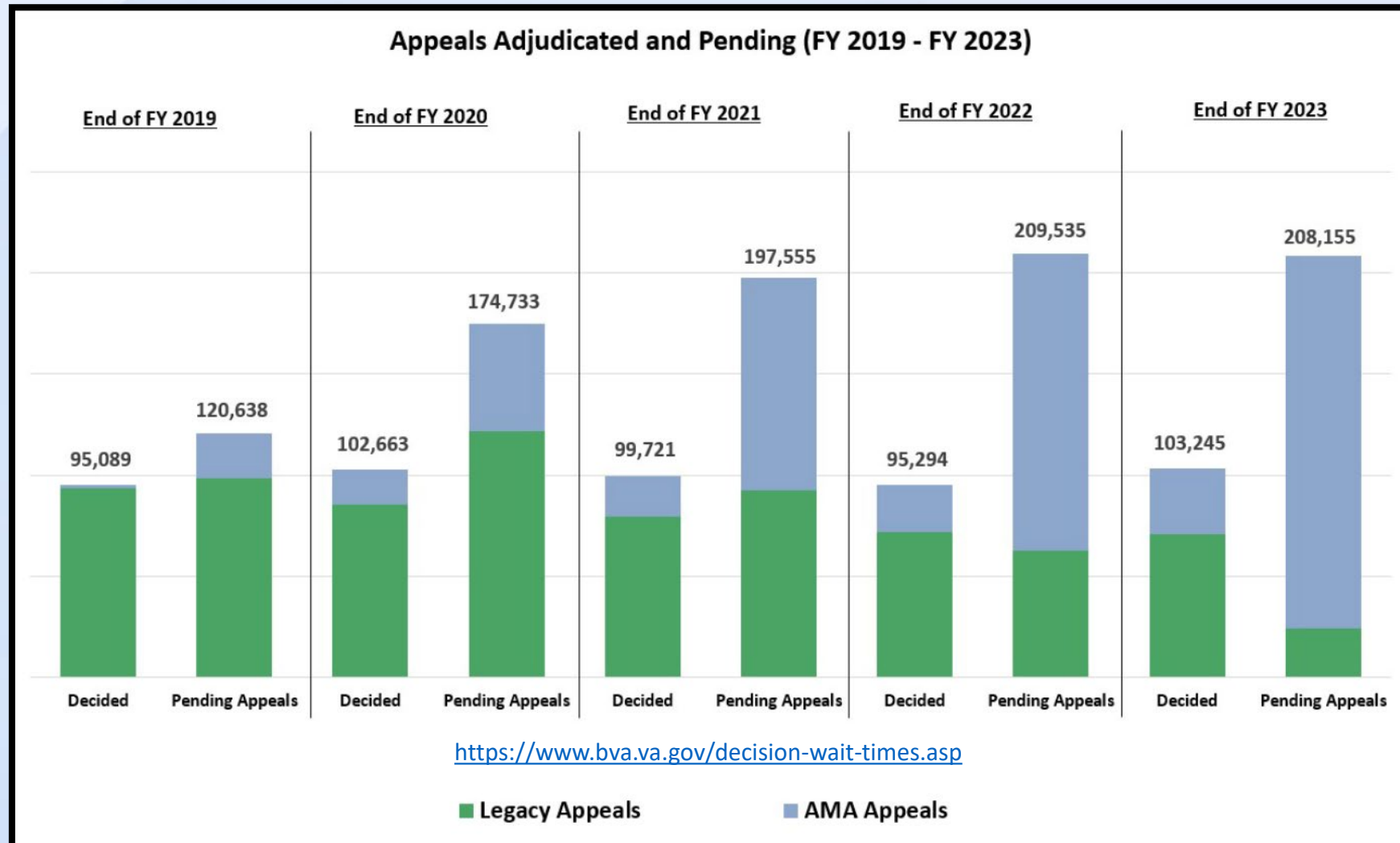
VA Data for CalVet Claims

Claim Type	Total Pending (044)	Total Backlogged (044)
Claims	59,612	17,666
Supplemental	7,594	1,662
Higher Level Review (HLR)	1,354	12
BDD (EP 336)	32	0*

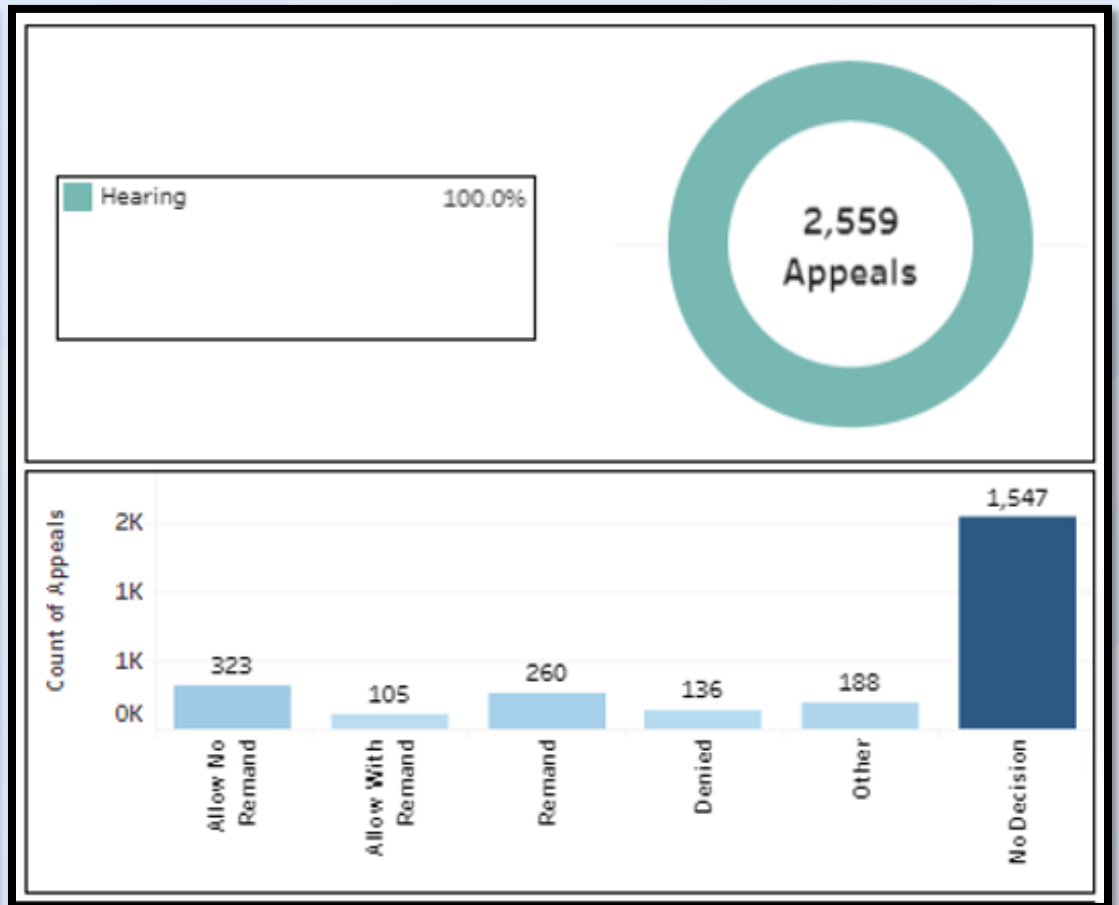
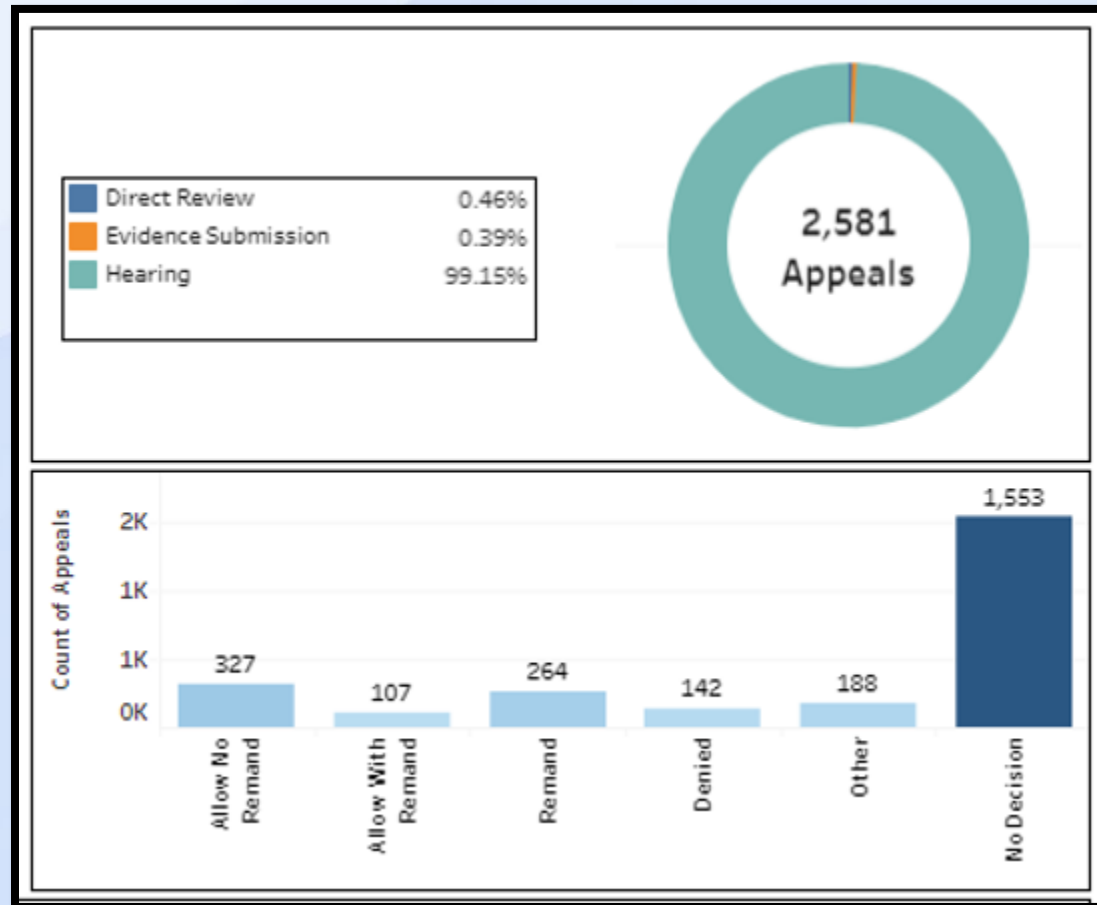
* BDD claims have the date of discharge as date of claim, so this zero backlog means none of the current BDD claims are past 125 days from date of discharge.

Claims data from the VARO, added to slides after presentation. (2/25/25-ZR)

BVA Decision Wait Times



Board Data for CalVet Representation



Appeals pending October 2019 to present (CA addresses only).


BVA data for CalVet-Represented Appeals, pulled February 7, 2025.

Board Data for CalVet Representation

Full Grant	Partial Grant	Remand	Denied	Other	No Decision	Total Appeals
323	105	260	136	188	1547	2559
Full & Partial Grants = 42%		26%	13%	19%		
(Total Appeals with Decisions Issued) 1012					1547	
39%					61%	

Appeals (hearing lane) received Oct 2019 to February 7, 2025:

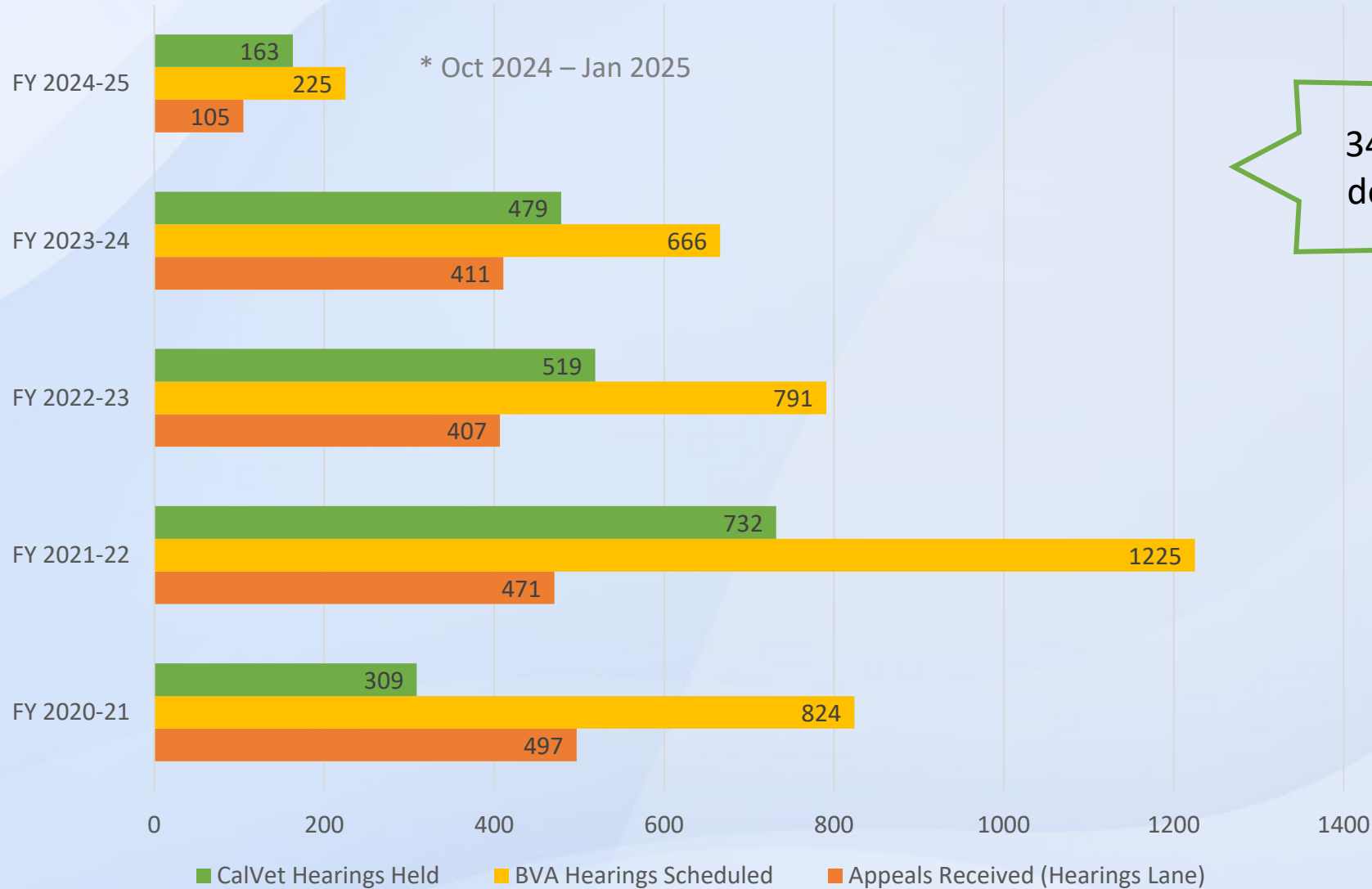
- Total: 2,559
- Decisions Issued: 1,012
- **No Decision: 1,547**



**1,547 pending.
It takes 3.5 years!**

Hearings scheduled this week still have 2021 docket dates – VAF 10182s received July and August 2021.

Board Data for Hearings



343-344-377
dockets only

July 2022 –
Reopened to
walk-ins

38 CFR §20.1304 Change in Representation

- **Rule 1304(a)** - An appellant will be granted a period of 90 days following receipt of a Notice of Disagreement, during which they may submit a request for a change in representation.
- **Rule 1304(b)** – After 90 days, the Board will not accept a request for a change in representation except when the appellant demonstrates on motion that there was good cause for the delay.
 - **Examples of good cause** – illness of the appellant or the representative which precluded action during the period; death of an individual representative; illness or incapacity of an individual representative which renders it impractical for an appellant to continue with said representative; and withdrawal of an individual representative.

38 CFR §20.1304 Change in Representation

- Rule 1304(b)(1) – If good cause is not shown,
 - the request for a change in representation will be referred to the agency of original jurisdiction
 - for association with the appellant's file for any pending or subsequently received claims upon completion of the Board's action on the pending appeal
 - without action by the Board concerning the request.
- Rule 1304(b)(2) – If good cause is shown, the request for a change in representation will be honored.

Higher Level Reviews/ Claims Accuracy Requests (CAR)

- Higher Level Review (HLR) is a De Novo review of an issue or issues in a VA Rating Decision.
- A Decision Review Officer (DRO) will review the issues and re-adjudicates the claim without deference to the prior decision.
- A completed and VA Form 20-0996 must be submitted within one year from the VA notification letter.
- The representative completing the form must identify an error in fact or law in the adjudicated claim
- A telephonic informal conference with a DRO may be requested to discuss the error(s) found – optional, not required.

Higher Level Review Restrictions

- HLR cannot be used to address a VA decision that's over a year old
- An HLR cannot be claimed over another HLR
- An HLR cannot be used for VA proposals (Pre-Decisional issues)
- An HLR cannot be used to address a BVA decision

Claims Accuracy Request (CAR)

- An expedited HLR process
- A completed and timely VA Form 20-0996 with “Claims Accuracy Request, or CAR” must be submitted to qualify for CAR
- Must identify an obvious error in fact or law (e.g. effective date, ITF vs. date of 526EZ)
- A Claims Accuracy Request must be submitted within 30 days from the notification to qualify
- A timely CAR will be adjudicated within 30 days or less
- An Informal Conference is not available for CARs

CAR Restrictions

- CAR over a CAR decision
- CAR over a Higher Level Review Decision
- CAR over a BVA decision
- CAR over typographical errors on a VA decision
- Legacy appeals
- Blue Water Navy veterans' claims
- Nehmer issues
- Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES) claims
- Restricted Access Claims (RACC) claims

District Managers

Alberto Alpasan

Los Angeles District Manager

Alberto.Alpasan@calvet.ca.gov

LADO@calvet.ca.gov

(213) 620-2755

Melaina Anker-Youngberg

San Diego District Manager

Melaina.Anker@va.gov

State.VBASDC@va.gov

(619) 400-0070

Zmae Raymundo

Oakland District Manager

Zheriemae.Raymundo@calvet.ca.gov

Oakland.Oakland@calvet.ca.gov

(510) 286-0627

Questions?

Note: POCs for each District Office
begins on the next page.

Oakland DO Staff list

Appeals Team

Steven Smith, Assistant District Manager

- Leonora (Cora) Sarmiento
- Agnes Manalo
- Elizabeth Grassetti
- Akeesha Barrett
- Liam Williams (Rancho office)
- Joseph Klabouch (Rancho office)
- Judy Cortez-Garcia
- Ma Cristina Enriquez-Perez

DO Review Team

Diane Susbilla, Team Supervisor

- Daniel Vilhauer
- Walter Huey
- Teri Markus
- Vacant position

Oakland DO Staff list - continued

Incarcerated Veterans Team (aka CDCR team)

Liz Hargrove-Washington, Team Supervisor

- Mary Donovan
- Tera Ireland
- Sofia Martin Del Campo
- Daryl Neff

Oakland District Office General Information

- **Oakland Office (Main):**
1301 Clay St. Suite 1130N
Oakland, CA 94612
Open Tue, Wed & Thurs
9:00 AM to 3:00 PM
Phone 510.286.0627
Fax 510.286.0653
- **Rancho Office:**
3046 Prospect Drive
Rancho Cordova, CA
Only for hearings & appointments
Phone 916.364.6774
- **Corporate inbox:**
Oakland.Oakland@calvet.ca.gov

Oakland DO Point-of-Contact (POCs)

Appeals team:

- ✓ For decision review guidance, email Steven – Steven.Smith@calvet.ca.gov
- ✓ For hearing schedule confirmations & inquiries, email Cora – Leonora.Sarmiento@calvet.ca.gov

DO Review team:

- ✓ The DO Reviewer of your claim activity
- ✓ Diane.Susbilla@calvet.ca.gov

CDCR team:

- ✓ Elizabeth.Hargove-Washington@calvet.ca.gov

Los Angeles DO Staff list

Alberto M. Alpasan, Jr. – District Manager

Front Office – Heather Maciel

Appeals Team

Darlene Dunlap, Appeals Manager

Maria Alatorre

Babes Navarra

Delores McLemore

Joberde Metellus

Isaac Escobar

Vacant – Part time

DO Review Team

Porcia Andrada

Sandra Matrecitos

Esther Luna

Isabella Alejandrino

Eileen Dizon

CDCR Team

Maura Meade – medical leave

Matthew Grimm

Los Angeles District Office General Information

11000 Wilshire Blvd. Ste. 505

Los Angeles

Open to the public:

Mon-Wed 8am to 3pm

(213) 620-2755

Corporate mail:

CDVALA@va.gov (you can send PII as long as you encrypt)

LA District Office POC

For issues relating to
appeals(hearings or to discuss
appeals issues):

Darlene Dunlap

Darlene.Dunlap@calvet.ca.gov

Darlene.Dunlap344@va.gov

San Diego DO Staff List

Melaina Anker-Youngberg

District Manager

Office Technician: Monica Flores

CalVet-CDCR Liaison

- Roberto Avila

Claim Support-Appeals

Tony Devore, Claims Support Supervisor

- Angel Bribiesca
- Adam Clark
- Judith (Judy) Roach
- Arnold Cantong
- Eugenia Agis
- Nikki Sada
- Vacant (Josie)

San Diego District Office General Information

- *San Diego District Office*
8810 Rio San Diego Dr. Rm 1162
San Diego, CA 92108
Open to the Public:
Tue., Wed., Thur. 8am-3:30pm
Public Line: (619) 857-5497
Fax Line: (619) 491-9201
- San Diego Corporate Email:
state.vbasdc@va.gov

San Diego Office Point of Contacts (POC)

- ✓ *Claim Guidance, AMA Decisions/Guidance, Board hearings & Board Appeals, email Tony Devore Tony.Devore@va.gov*
- ✓ *CDCR (Incarcerated Veterans), email Roberto Avila Roberto.Avila@calvet.ca.gov*

Note: *We're Moving End of March*

*8620 Spectrum Blvd. Rm 725
San Diego, CA 92123*