



California Department  
of Veterans Affairs

# District Offices

February 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

	<b>Claims Filed</b>	<b>VAEs held</b>	<b>In-Person Interviews</b>	<b>Letters to veterans</b>	<b>Retro</b>	<b>Adjusted Monthly</b>	<b>Full Monthly Entitlement</b>
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
<b>2024 Total</b>	<b>499</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>477</b>	<b>1034</b>	<b>\$337,899</b>	<b>\$ 58,337</b>	<b>\$ 130,134</b>

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
<b><u>Oakland DO</u></b> 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
<b><u>Los Angeles DO</u></b> 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
<b><u>San Diego DO</u></b> 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
<b>2024 TOTAL</b>	<b>20,502</b>	<b>21,450</b>	<b>8,979</b>

## 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"><li>• No bank account? Please include the FS1201W, <i>Request for Payment of Federal Benefits by Check</i>, with their VA Form 21-525ez.</li><li>• 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.</li></ul>
VA Form 21-22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Switching from a private agent or attorney without the termination of representation/fee letter.</li><li>• Missing signatures – more often it's the VSO signature that's missing.</li></ul>
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"><li>• Unsigned or unsaved forms show up as blank forms for DO Reviewer.</li><li>• Transposed Social Security numbers, and even names.</li><li>• Sloppy scans – skewed forms or pages not in order. Those need manual review instead of mail automation action.</li><li>• Scanned in VP but not attached to claim package (i.e. DD214).</li></ul>
Dependents	Best practice for adding spouse or biological child, and veteran is tech-able, suggest submission online at <a href="http://www.va.gov">www.va.gov</a> . 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
<b>CY 2024 Total</b>	<b>393</b>	<b>294</b>	<b>117</b>

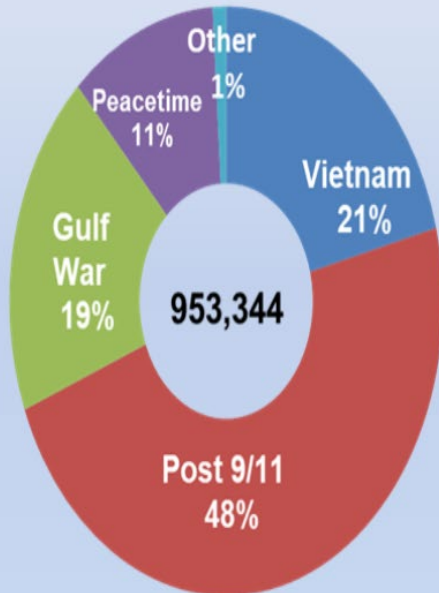
- Please reach out to us if the appellant reaches out to you. Remember, even when we are notified early, we still have to work our cases according to the hearing date.
- If you are hosting the virtual hearing in your office, let us know if rep will stay with appellant. We need to notify BVA Coordinator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

# Veterans Affairs Claims Backlog

## Characteristics of Claims

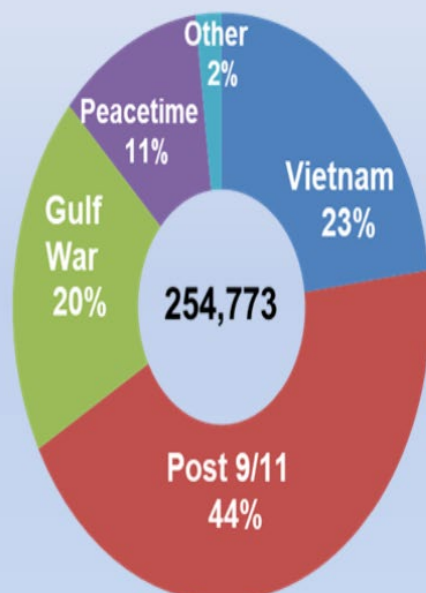
[https://benefits.va.gov/REPORTS/characteristics\\_of\\_claims.asp](https://benefits.va.gov/REPORTS/characteristics_of_claims.asp)

### Total Pending Claims



Data as of: 02/01/25

### Total Backlogged Claims



Backlog: Claims pending longer than 125 days

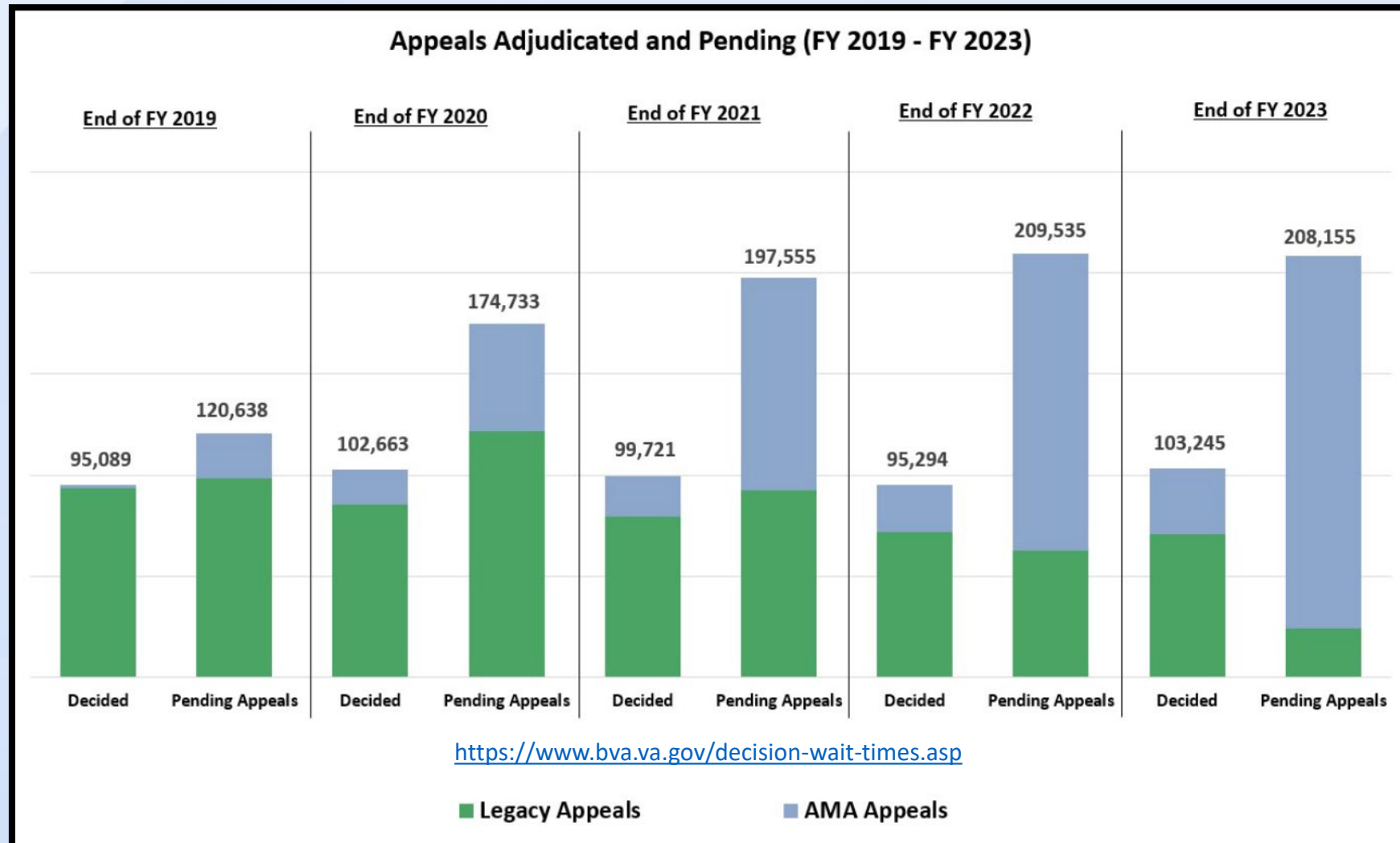
Over 250K backlogged claims right now.

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

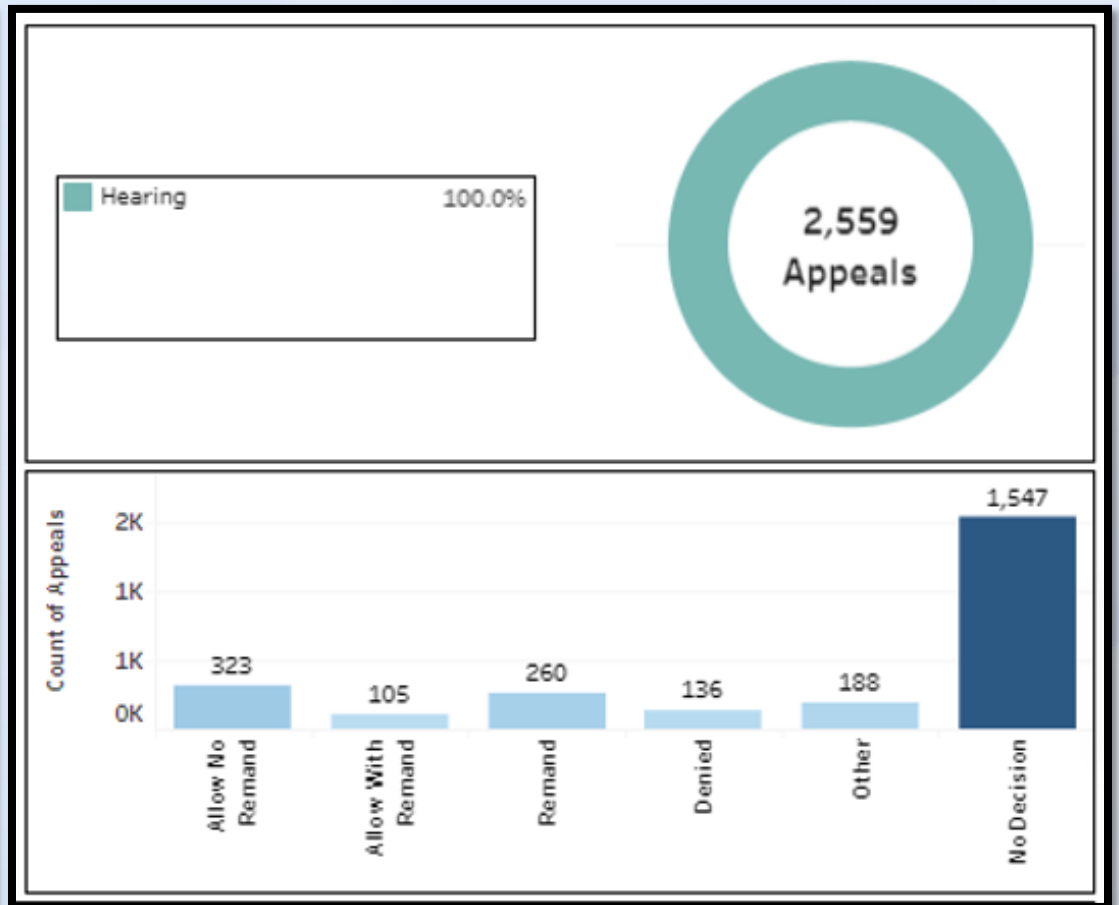
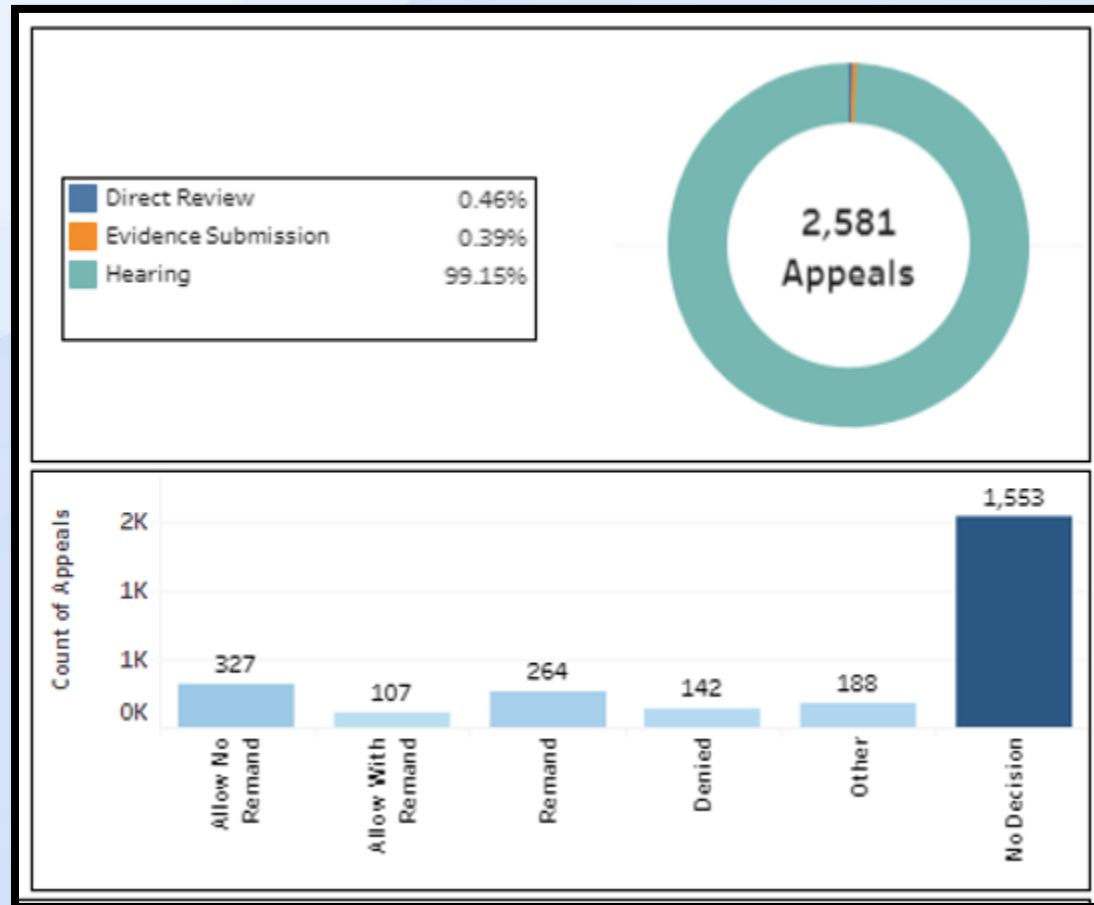
### Priority Processing Requests (VAF 20-10207)

- 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

# 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 = <b>42%</b>		<b>26%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>19%</b>		
(Total Appeals with Decisions Issued) 1012					1547	
<b>39%</b>					<b>61%</b>	

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

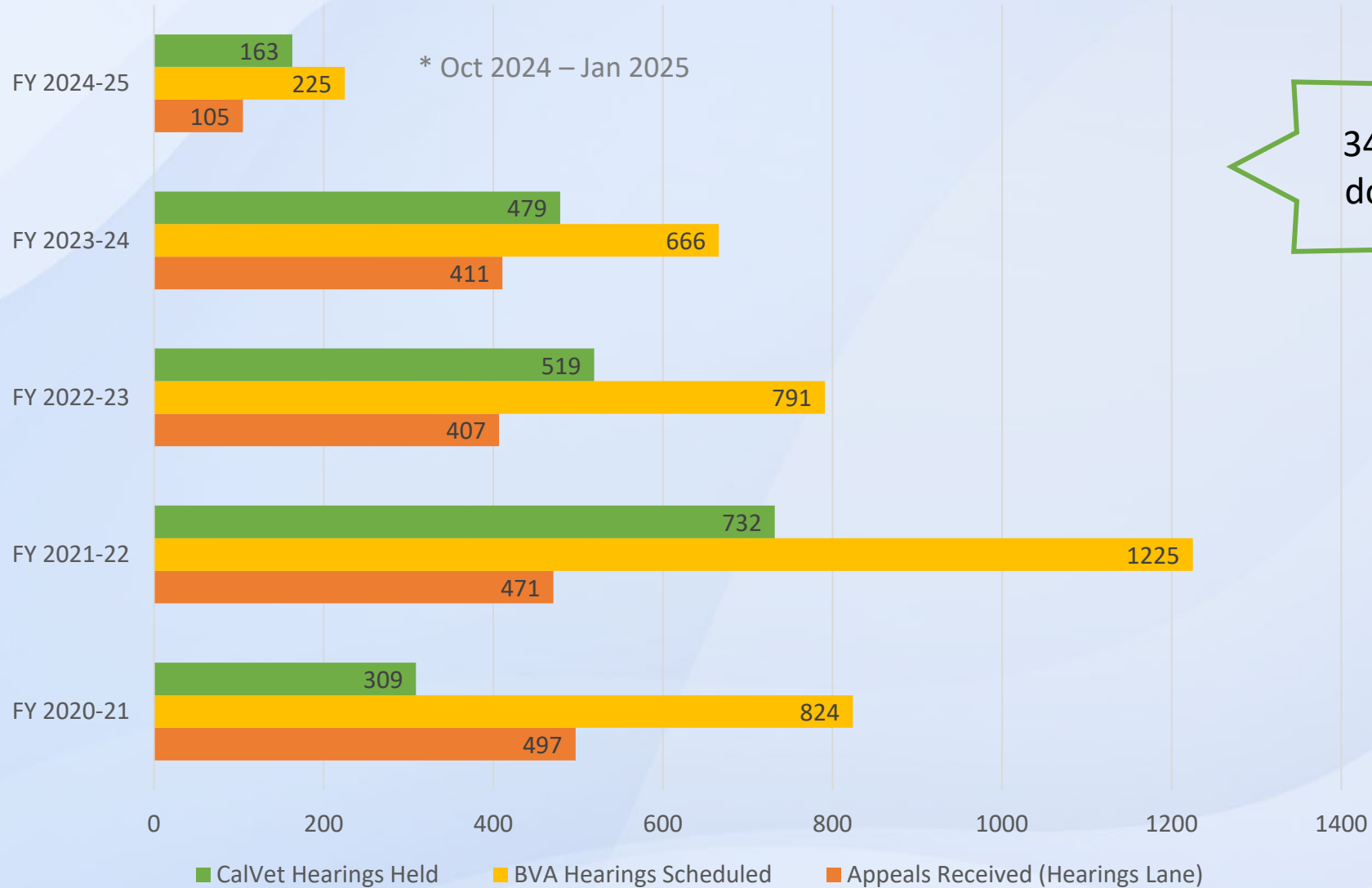
- Total: 2,559
- Decisions Issued: 1,012
- **No Decision: 1,547**



**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](mailto:Alberto.Alpasan@calvet.ca.gov)

[LADO@calvet.ca.gov](mailto:LADO@calvet.ca.gov)

(213) 620-2755

## **Melaina Anker-Youngberg**

San Diego District Manager

[Melaina.Anker@va.gov](mailto:Melaina.Anker@va.gov)

[State.VBASDC@va.gov](mailto:State.VBASDC@va.gov)

(619) 400-0070

## **Zmae Raymundo**

Oakland District Manager

[Zheriemae.Raymundo@calvet.ca.gov](mailto:Zheriemae.Raymundo@calvet.ca.gov)

[Oakland.Oakland@calvet.ca.gov](mailto: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](mailto:Oakland.Oakland@calvet.ca.gov)

## Oakland DO Point-of-Contact (POCs)

### Appeals team:

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

### DO Review team:

- ✓ The DO Reviewer of your claim activity
- ✓ [Diane.Susbilla@calvet.ca.gov](mailto:Diane.Susbilla@calvet.ca.gov)

### CDCR team:

- ✓ [Elizabeth.Hargove-Washington@calvet.ca.gov](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:Darlene.Dunlap@calvet.ca.gov)

[Darlene.Dunlap344@va.gov](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:Tony.Devore@va.gov)*
- ✓ *CDCR (Incarcerated Veterans), email Roberto Avila [Roberto.Avila@calvet.ca.gov](mailto:Roberto.Avila@calvet.ca.gov)*

Note: *We're Moving End of March*

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