

VETERANS BENEFITS & BEYOND

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2018

JAN DILS 
ATTORNEYS AT LAW, L C



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The Veterans Administration's Board of Veterans' Appeals Resolves a Record Number of Claims to Date for FY 2018.

If you receive our Social Security e-news, we had a very newsworthy and important article "No One Should Die Waiting for Benefits." While our Social Security newsletter is about disability benefits, this particular article spoke to the alarming statistics as they relate to our Veterans. In summary, after the recession of 2008, a backlog began to build in the court of appeals for Veteran disability benefits. Many appeals must happen before the Board of Veterans' Appeals (BVA). The court quickly found itself understaffed, leading to longer wait periods and ultimately an increase in the number of deaths among those awaiting a fair hearing. This article talks about strides that have finally been made.

Underscoring the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) pledge to reduce the

wait time for those appealing disability benefits claims, the BVA has signed more than 53,650 decisions to date in fiscal year (FY) 2018, which is approximately 86 percent more than the 28,839 decisions signed through the same period last year.

The good news is, the Board is currently on track to meet and exceed its fiscal year 2018 total goal of reviewing a historic 81,000 appeals by September 30, 2018.

This pace paves the way for implementation of the Appeals Modernization Act, which has a target implementation date of February 14, 2019, and will offer Veterans more choices and control over their claims and appeals process.

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Jan's Letter

There is lots of good news coming out of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Many families were hit hard by the recession of 2008, but few harder than our Veterans. The Bush Doctrine, "War on Terror," has had troops on the ground fighting the Afghanistan War since 2001 and the Iraq War in 2003. The wars have taken their toll resulting in tens of thousands of military deaths and injuries. Countless Veterans coming home postrecession found themselves waiting in line for benefits – many of them literally dying to receive their earned disability. In 2017, Congress finally acted allocating \$42 million dollars to hire the staff desperately needed to process claims. At this point in 2018, we are seeing 86 percent more decisions over the previous fiscal year. Of

course, at Jan Dils, Attorneys at Law, we won't rest until it's 100 percent perfect.

Another big milestone is that, in a bipartisan measure, the VA Mission Act has been signed, sealed and delivered. This act is going to streamline care programs, increase healthcare access and expand programs for our caregivers. However, the complex system can still be confusing and tiresome. If you or a loved one ever needs assistance, do not hesitate to give us a call. We have five offices in West Virginia as well as an office in Charlotte, NC. We are here to offer expert advice through a free consultation.

Sincerely,
Jan Dils

Jan Dils brings her expertise to issues that affect you and millions of other Americans every day. While her knowledge spans the critical areas pertaining to Personal Injury, Veterans' benefits, Social Security disability benefits and related appeals and claims, her practice remains focused on people, making sure you get the right answers and, above all, results.



Spotlight Employee

Jamie Kincheloe

Jamie Kincheloe has been a valuable part of the Jan Dils team for a little over four years. Working in the Mail and Scanning Department, he keeps the communication going and flowing.

Jamie is a man of great faith with God and family being his highest priority.

When Jamie's not hard at work, he loves to travel to see family in North Carolina and Florida as well as visiting new places and states he has yet to discover.

He is also quite the animal lover with a 5-year-old shih-tzu named Sugar.

A die-hard WVU sports fan, Jamie is a true West Virginian. You'll catch him at most football games in the fall.

Jamie also collects WVU memorabilia and attends as many WVU sports functions and events as possible.

"My job with the Jan Dils team has given me opportunities to meet and work alongside a lot of really wonderful people while at the same time helping our clients get the benefits they deserve!"

His faith and kindness are infectious. He is a genuine example of the culture and spirit of our firm. We are lucky and proud to have Jamie on the Jan Dils team.



Office Inbox

STAY PLUGGED INTO THE PRACTICE

Want the scoop on what's new with our business and the team? You can find it right here, so stay plugged into the practice.

Jan Dils, Attorneys at Law is pleased to welcome a new employee to our Veterans Affairs team: **Jen Barnhart** has joined Lead and Intake.

We also have had some exciting internal transitions. **Robbie Milburn** has joined VA Case Management Support, **Jessica Scott** has moved to VA Hearing Clerk Support and **Natalie Wagner** is bringing her tremendous skills to the VA Medical Reviewing team.

Community Spotlight

Summer is flying by. It seems like just yesterday that the Jan Dils team had our annual summer picnic at the riverfront park in Vienna, West Virginia. Firm members and their families enjoyed hot dogs, hamburgers and snow cones. We also had a photo scavenger hunt and a variety of other competitive events – like this one! Robbie Milburn and Jamie Kincheloe give it their all in the three-legged race. This picnic is an event we look forward to every year.



The VA Fulfills Its Mission to Improve Healthcare.

The VA Mission Act of 2018 is designed to greatly improve Veteran access to VA healthcare. What does it mean for Veterans? The VA Mission Act addresses in-network and non-VA healthcare issues, Veterans' homes, access to walk-in VA care, prescription drug procedures, and much more.

This VA reform law affects a wide range of areas and the "official" name of this law says a lot about its focus; informally known as the VA Mission Act, this legislation's formal name is the VA Maintaining Systems and Strengthening Integrated Outside Networks Act.

The Act received bipartisan support fostered by the tireless work of both the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairmen Rep. Phil Roe and Sen. Johnny Isakson, along with members of the committees, led to the overwhelming passage of the Act.

President Trump signed the Mission Act into law on June 6, 2018. The VA now must work on the criteria to be considered, including wait times for VA appointments, quality of VA care and distance from a VA facility.

"In every generation there have been heroes like them, patriots who answer the call to serve, who do whatever it takes,

wherever and whenever we need them to defend America," stated President Trump. "They put everything on the line for us. And when they come home, we must do everything that we can possibly do for them. And that's what we're doing."

More than 30 Veteran service organizations (VSOs) have endorsed this reform effort as it worked its way through legislative channels.

At Jan Dils, Attorneys at Law, we are

pleased to report positive efforts by our government to improve the care of our heroes. While we remain optimistic, we know the system can be difficult to navigate and all too many Veterans still fall through the cracks. If you have questions or concerns, we have the answers with more than 24 years of experience. Your first consultation is always free. Call us toll-free at **877.526.3457** or send us an email through our website: **jandils.com**.



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-President Trump

Sources: www.militarybenefits.info/va-mission-act / www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=4068

Word Game

A mumbo jumbo is a list of words/hints for you to unscramble. You then take designated letters from each word/hint to come up with the final message that is associated with each hint you have unscrambled.

HUBS	□ □ ○ □
LOTNNIC	□ □ ○ □ □ □
GARNAE	○ ○ □ □ □
DRFO	□ □ □ ○
TARCER	□ □ □ □ ○ □

P □ □ □ □ □ □ □ S

Final Message: PRESIDENTS
 Answers: Bush, Clinton, Reagan, Ford, Carter

Veterans Affairs case manager **Bobbie Sheppard** just made the impossible possible. This **savory taco soup** is only 1 Weight Watchers® point! Maybe that's what had the judges of our April Crockpot Cook-Off fundraiser coming back for more. Awarded first place, try this "blue ribbon" recipe for yourself.

Ingredients:

- 1lb ground beef or chicken (or some of both if you choose)
- 1 package low sodium taco seasoning
- 1 package Hidden Valley Ranch dry mix
- 1 can of black beans (drained and rinsed)
- 1 can of kidney beans (I use light red)
- 1 can of tomatoes with green chilis
- 1 can of petite diced tomatoes
- 1 can of low sodium beef broth
- 1 can of corn

DIRECTIONS: Simply combine all of the ingredients in a crockpot and come home to a fiesta! Note, you can add more of one item if you choose or double the recipe for a bigger batch. Bobbie also likes to add more tomatoes and corn.



Important Veterans Benefits News For Everyone

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Continued from cover story

Here is what the new law will do:

- Modernize our current claims and appeals process.
- Include three options for Veterans dissatisfied with VA's decision on their claims to seek review.
- Require improved notification of VA decisions.
- Streamline the claims and appeals process to provide you with the earliest possible resolution of your claim.
- Provide safeguards to ensure you receive the earliest effective date possible for your claim.

"I'm proud of the Board for its dedication and commitment toward resolving appeals decisions for Veterans and striving to reach a historic fiscal year goal of 81,000 appeals decisions delivered to Veterans," said the VA's Acting Secretary Peter O'Rourke. "The Board's significant

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VA'S ACTING SECRETARY PETER O'ROURKE

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increase in results for Veterans and their families serves as another strong example of the department's commitment to getting it right for Veterans."

In FY 2017, Congress allocated the Board approximately \$42 million, which was used to hire additional staff, primarily more than 200 decision-writing attorneys and 24 Veterans law judges. The increase in staff, along with streamlining several processes, contributed to the result.

The VA's Board of Veterans' Appeals' mission is to conduct hearings and decide appeals in a timely manner. The VA's disability appeals process is a complex, multistep adjudication process that uses "open records," which allows Veterans to submit medical and lay evidence at any point from the beginning to the end of the process, including while the claim is pending an appeal; this may, in turn, require the VA to develop further evidence on the Veteran's behalf.

At Jan Dils, Attorneys at Law, we believe no one should die waiting for benefits - especially our Veterans. We must continue to be vigilant. If you or a spouse of a Veteran have suffered a loss due to extreme waiting periods, don't hesitate to contact Jan Dils, Attorneys at Law.