



# TEXAS VETERANS COMMISSION

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# Press Release

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## Texas Veterans Commission State Strike Force Teams move forward to assist the VA in processing over 68,000 backlogged disability claims

AUSTIN – Today the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC) announced that the “State Strike Force Teams,” directed by Gov. Rick Perry, Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst and Speaker of the House Joe Straus, are being assembled to assist in reducing the federal backlog of over 68,000 disability claims at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Houston and Waco Regional Offices.

During a hearing of the Texas Senate Committee on Veteran Affairs and Military Installations, chaired by Sen. Leticia Van de Putte, TVC officials testified that since January 2010, the total pending caseload in Texas has more than doubled from over 50,934 claims and 15,644 appeals to 107,279 claims and 28,183 appeals as of July 2012, with 68,612 claims pending over 125 days.

The State of Texas is committing \$1.5 million for the State Strike Force Teams, which will be modeled after the successful Claims Processing Assistance Teams that the state piloted in 2009. As a result of the Strike Force Teams’ efforts, more than 17,000 Texas Veterans and their families will receive their Veteran disability compensation and pension payments earlier than expected.

“By creating the State Strike Force Teams, Gov. Perry, Lt. Gov. Dewhurst, and Speaker Straus have taken one of the boldest and most meaningful actions to help Texas Veterans and their families in the history of the state,” said Thomas Palladino, Executive Director of the Texas Veterans Commission. “This action should serve as a model to other states and a call to the VA to increase the level of support to its regional offices in Texas.”

Two State Strike Force Teams, each consisting of eight claims counselors, will be located at the VA Regional Offices in Waco and Houston. There will also be “Fully Developed Claims” Teams with eight new claims counselors in Dallas, Fort Worth, Temple, Austin, Houston, San Antonio and McAllen to improve access and assist Veterans in filing and fully developing claims. Staff from these teams will also be located at each regional office to expedite fully developed claims, and work on claims for Veterans and family members with unique challenges.

“Now more than ever, our Veterans need our support and we want to make sure that Texas Veterans receive their hard earned benefits,” said James Richman, TVC Director of Claims Representation and Counseling. “Over 68,000 in backlogged claims is a loss of millions of federal dollars due to Veterans and their families that will not only benefit them but will ultimately strengthen our Texas economy.”

#### Texas Veterans Commission

The mission of the Texas Veterans Commission is to advocate for and provide superior service to Veterans and their families in the areas of disability claims assistance, employment services, education benefits and grant funding. Over 200 skilled counselors in 75 cities provide one-on-one guidance to Veterans and their families to ensure they receive all of the benefits to which they are entitled. For more information about the Texas Veterans Commission services click here: <http://www.tvc.texas.gov/Home.aspx>.

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