

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

May 20, 2021

The Honorable Lloyd J. Austin III  
Secretary  
Department of Defense  
1400 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Secretary Austin:

We are writing to ask that you prioritize a request from the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) for assistance in addressing the backlog of requests at the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC).

The NPRC maintains and services military personnel and medical records on behalf of the Department of Defense (DOD).<sup>1</sup> Veterans require access to these records to receive certain service-related benefits, including medical treatment, unemployment assistance, home loans, and emergency services for unhoused veterans.<sup>2</sup>

According to NARA, many of the records housed at the NPRC exist only in paper form and cannot be accessed remotely.<sup>3</sup> Since NARA implemented workplace restrictions last year in response to the coronavirus pandemic, the NPRC has been unable to process thousands of requests for veterans records. As of May 10, 2021, NARA reported that the backlog now stands at over 500,000 delayed requests. In addition to these unprocessed records requests, the NPRC also has a backlog of 400,000 records that need to be refiled.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from Archivist of the United States David S. Ferriero, National Archives and Records Administration, to Chairwoman Carolyn B. Maloney, Committee on Oversight and Reform, et al. (Dec. 9, 2020) (online at <https://oversight.house.gov/sites/democrats.oversight.house.gov/files/NARA.201209.Letter%20re%20NPRC.pdf>).

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*; National Archives and Records Administration, *Press Release: National Personnel Records Center Prepares for Expansion of Onsite Workforce* (Mar. 8, 2021) (online at [www.archives.gov/press/press-releases/2021/nr21-30](http://www.archives.gov/press/press-releases/2021/nr21-30)).

<sup>3</sup> Letter from Archivist of the United States David S. Ferriero, National Archives and Records Administration, to Chairwoman Carolyn B. Maloney, Committee on Oversight and Reform, et al. (Dec. 9, 2020) (online at <https://oversight.house.gov/sites/democrats.oversight.house.gov/files/NARA.201209.Letter%20re%20NPRC.pdf>); see also *Veterans Across U.S. Can't Access Benefits Because Key Agency Hasn't Returned to Work*, NBC LX (Mar. 16, 2021) (online at [www.lx.com/?\\_osource=sm\\_npd\\_nbc\\_lx\\_eml\\_gen](http://www.lx.com/?_osource=sm_npd_nbc_lx_eml_gen)).

<sup>4</sup> Letter from Chief Operating Officer William J. Bosanko, National Archives and Records Administration, to Executive Secretary, Office of the Secretary of Defense, Department of Defense (May 10, 2021) (online at <https://oversight.house.gov/sites/democrats.oversight.house.gov/files/DoD%20RFA%20for%20NPRC%2005%2010%202021.pdf>).

The NPRC has been unable to process non-emergency requests for months. While the NPRC is taking a number of steps to rectify the service impacts caused by the coronavirus pandemic, including by working with the Department of Veterans Affairs to digitize records and enhancing its remote work capabilities, NPRC still expects it will take nearly two years to resolve the backlog.<sup>5</sup>

On May 10, 2021, NARA Chief Operating Officer William J. Bosanko wrote a letter to DOD requesting assistance for pandemic recovery operations at the NPRC. Specifically, NARA is requesting support to conduct off-site sorting and batching of military personnel folders for refiling, on-site searching and retrieval of veterans' records, and assistance with digitizing separation documents that veterans depend on to demonstrate their eligibility for federal benefits.<sup>6</sup>

We respectfully ask DOD to prioritize and fulfill NARA's request. Veterans and their families depend on timely access to personnel records in order to receive life-saving medical care, emergency housing assistance, proper military burials, and other vital benefits earned through service to our country. We urge DOD to support the NPRC's work and to ensure that we uphold our solemn pledge to care for our nation's veterans.

Sincerely,



Carolyn B. Maloney  
Chairwoman  
Committee on Oversight and Reform



James Comer  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Oversight and Reform



Mark Takano  
Chairman  
Committee on Veterans' Affairs

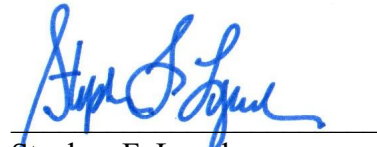


Mike Bost  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Veterans' Affairs

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<sup>5</sup> Letter from Archivist of the United States David S. Ferriero, National Archives and Records Administration, to Chairwoman Carolyn B. Maloney, Committee on Oversight and Reform, et al. (Mar. 31, 2021) (online at <https://oversight.house.gov/sites/democrats.oversight.house.gov/files/NARA.210331.Update%20re%20NPRC.pdf>).

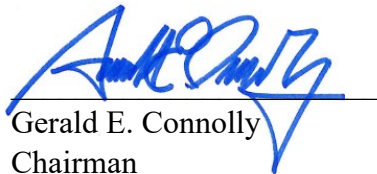
<sup>6</sup> Letter from Chief Operating Officer William J. Bosanko, National Archives and Records Administration, to Executive Secretary, Office of the Secretary of Defense, Department of Defense (May 10, 2021) (online at <https://oversight.house.gov/sites/democrats.oversight.house.gov/files/DoD%20RFA%20for%20NPRC%2005%2010%202021.pdf>).



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Chairman  
Subcommittee on National Security  
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