

JERRY MORAN, KANSAS  
CHAIRMAN  
JOHN BOOZMAN, ARKANSAS  
BILL CASSIDY, LOUISIANA  
MIKE ROUNDS, SOUTH DAKOTA  
THOM TILLIS, NORTH CAROLINA  
DAN SULLIVAN, ALASKA  
MARSHA BLACKBURN, TENNESSEE  
KEVIN CRAMER, NORTH DAKOTA  
KELLY LOEFFLER, GEORGIA

CAROLINE CANFIELD, STAFF DIRECTOR

# United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

JON TESTER, MONTANA  
RANKING MEMBER  
PATTY MURRAY, WASHINGTON  
BERNARD SANDERS, VERMONT  
SHERROD BROWN, OHIO  
RICHARD BLUMENTHAL, CONNECTICUT  
MAZIE HIRONO, HAWAII  
JOE MANCHIN III, WEST VIRGINIA  
KYRSTEN SINEMA, ARIZONA

TONY McCLAIN, STAFF DIRECTOR

June 23, 2020

Scott Levins  
Director, National Personnel Records Center  
1 Archives Drive  
St. Louis, MO 63138

Dear Mr. Levins,

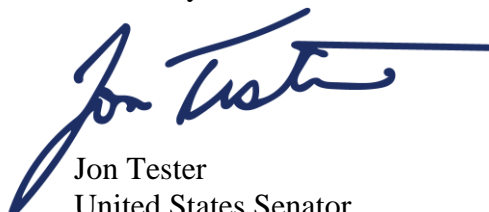
Over the past several months, my office has seen an uptick in the number of veteran constituents in Montana requesting assistance in retrieving their service records from the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC). Although I understand the risks posed by COVID-19, and the priority placed on the health and safety of our public servants, we must ensure our nation's veterans receive critical assistance during this unprecedented time. Therefore, I respectfully request clarification on NPRC's plan to mitigate employees' risk of exposure to the virus, and measures to provide veterans more timely responses to their record requests.

My office has been told by representatives of NPRC that only record retrievals for veterans' funerals or for veterans who have a terminal illness will be undertaken. However, with many veterans seeking their service records to prove eligibility for other benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), it is imperative that we mitigate any delay that jeopardizes timely consideration of their claims. In April and May, my staff was informed that record requests for veterans who did not fall under those urgent categories would have to wait up to 150 days. In the beginning of June, my office was informed that there is no longer any estimate or timetable for when these veterans can receive their records. While I understand and support the need to keep NPRC employees safe, we simply cannot leave our nation's veterans behind. At this time, how many requests are being held at NPRC that are not considered urgent?

Many health experts expect the COVID-19 pandemic to continue into the foreseeable future. As such, I would appreciate information on the steps NPRC is taking to mitigate virus exposure so that staff can resume their normal duties. I am confident that we can find a path forward that will keep staff safe, while fulfilling our commitment to providing veterans with their earned benefits. To that end, what can Congress do to assist NPRC to resume normal operations in a safe manner?

I look forward to your reply and I hope to work with you to ensure your staff's safety, while simultaneously making sure these veterans receive the assistance they need.

Sincerely,



Jon Tester  
United States Senator