



Vietnam Veterans of America

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A Not-For-Profit Veterans Service Organization Chartered by the United States Congress

January 29, 2018

RE: VVA's Guidance for the Rapid Appeals Modernization Program (RAMP)

Dear State Council Presidents:

This letter is intended to provide general guidance on the Rapid Appeals Modernization Program (RAMP) for you to use or disseminate as appropriate to your membership. On August 23, 2017, Congress enacted *the Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017*, which will drastically change the VA claims and appeals process. The new law will officially go into effect February 2019; however, VA has already initiated a temporary program that partially implements the new law. This temporary program is called RAMP.

To participate in RAMP, veterans must receive an “opt-in” letter from VA asking if they wish to participate in this **optional** pilot program. Choosing to opt-in to RAMP is an **irreversible decision**. RAMP uses different legal standards and rules that may not be pro-veteran; a “faster decision” does not mean a “favorable decision.” **Due to various factors, it is the current position of the Veterans Benefits Program (VBP) that veterans not opt-in to RAMP at this time.**

Importantly, it is strongly encouraged for anyone receiving a RAMP letter who has questions to reach out to his or her local accredited service representative for guidance. Accredited service representatives are able to look up the claim and see what is going on, as well as provide claim-specific advice. Without the proper training and expertise, it may be difficult for a person who is not a service officer to answer some of the more intricate and complex questions that may arise from RAMP inquiries. Thus, the VBP makes the following recommendations:

1. State Council Presidents and leaders in the state that are *not* accredited service representative should refer any questions about RAMP to an accredited service officer. To locate an accredited service representative that is nearby to your membership, please visit <https://vva.org/what-we-do/veteran-services/claims-assistance/> and search by zip code or state.

2. If a state is receiving questions about RAMP from its membership and there is not an active service officer program in that state, state leadership should refer the VVA-represented veteran or family member to VVA's National Veterans Benefits Program office. The direct line to that office is (202) 530-9180. For states that do not have an active service officer program, please know that VVA's VBP is directly reaching out to each veteran or family member that will receive an opt-in letter to provide legal support and guidance if the individual is represented by VVA.

For any additional questions about RAMP or the new law, please do not hesitate to reach out to me at the contact information below.

Sincerely,

//s// KY

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