

In [November](#) , I contacted the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to express my strong concern that the Oakland Regional Office was no longer processing Notice of Disagreements (NODs). A NOD is submitted by a veteran if their initial disability claim is rejected and they wish to appeal that decision. I wanted to share [the reply](#) I recently received from VA Secretary Eric Shinseki. Secretary Shinseki acknowledged that there was a decline in NOD processing because some members of the Oakland appeals processing team were out on extended medical leave, while others were reassigned to assist in processing disability claims related to exposure to Agent Orange. Importantly, he assured me that the Veterans Benefits Administration has taken action to increase the staffing level assigned to the Oakland Regional Office's appeals team. While I am pleased that staffing will increase, please know that I will continue to closely monitor this situation to ensure that the Oakland office processes NODs from Northern California veterans in a timely manner.