DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Veterans Benefits Administration
Washington, D.C. 20420

FOIA Request 26-20149-F

July 14, 2026

Wesley McCauley
United Veteran's Disability, LLC
100 North Patterson Street
Valdosta, , 3160

jwojnarowski@ad-vance.com

Dear Wojnarowski:

This letter is the initial agency decision to your May 8, 2026, Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. § 552, submitted to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Veterans Benefits Administration Central Office (VBACO), FOIA Office.

In summary, you requested the following:

- Copies of all records relating to the below listed items. The requested search period is from January 1, 2025, to the date the VA fulfills this request. Any documents, data, e-mails, memorandums, etc., that relate to the "Freedom 250 Backlog Challenge." (Date Range for Record Search: From 1/1/2025 To 5/8/2026).

Request Procedural History

The VBA FOIA office received your FOIA request on May 8, 2026. The VBACO FOIA Office requested a search for the responsive records, maintained by VA Office of Field Operations with a search date of January 1, 2025, to May 8, 2026.

The search for responsive records was conducted utilizing Microsoft Office, and OFO Corporate mailbox. The key search terms utilized were the keywords “Freedom 250 backlog challenge”

The Program Analyst from OFO retrieved 53 pages of records that were deemed responsive to your request. The records were provided to the VBACO FOIA office for further processing.

VBACO B6 IAD Letter
July 14, 2026
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Upon completion of my review, I have determined that the document contains information which falls within the disclosure protections of FOIA Exemption 6, 5 U.S.C. § 552(b)(6). Therefore, I am partially releasing 53 pages of responsive records to you.

FOIA Exemption 6 permits the VA to withhold a document or information contained within a document if disclosure of the information would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of a living individual/s personal privacy.

Stated another way, VA may withhold information under FOIA Exemption 6 where disclosure of the information, either by itself or in conjunction with other information available to either the public or the FOIA requester, would result in an unwarranted invasion of an individual's personal privacy without contributing significantly to the public's understanding of the activities of the federal government.

Specifically, the information we are withholding in part or in full , under FOIA Exemption 6 consists of names, email addresses, phone numbers and other personal Identifying Information (PII) of a VA employees and their superiors in their administrative or decision-making capacities, as the individuals associated with this information have a personal privacy interest in it. . Release of this information would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy. Disclosure could reasonably be expected to harm the individuals' privacy interests by exposing them to unwanted contact, potential harassment, or other misuse of their personal information.

After careful consideration, the agency has determined that no countervailing public interest outweighs the substantial privacy interests at stake. Therefore, disclosure would foreseeably harm the protected personal privacy interests that Exemption (b)(6) is designed to safeguard.

The coverage of FOIA Exemption 6 is absolute unless the FOIA requester can demonstrate a countervailing public interest in the requested information by demonstrating that the individual is in a position to provide the requested information to members of the general public and that the information requested contributes significantly to the public's understanding of the activities of the Federal government.

Additionally, the requester must demonstrate how the public's need to understand the information significantly outweighs the privacy interest of the person to whom the information pertains. Upon consideration of the materials provided, we have not been able to identify a countervailing public interest of sufficient magnitude to outweigh the privacy interest in this case. The individuals associated with this information have a personal privacy interest in information that outweighs any public interest served by disclosure of their identities under FOIA. Consequently, we are denying your request for this information under FOIA Exemption 6, 5 U.S.C. § 552 (b)(6).

If you disagree with our decision to withhold the information under FOIA Exemption 6, please be advised that you may appeal to:

VBACO B6 IAD Letter
July 14, 2026
FOIA 26-20149-F

Office of the General Counsel (024)
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20420
ogcfoiaappeals@va.gov

If you should choose to file an appeal, your appeal must be postmarked or electronically transmitted no later than ninety (90) calendar days from the date of this letter. Please include a copy of this letter with your written appeal and clearly state why you disagree with the determinations set forth in this response.

You may also seek assistance and/or dispute resolution services for any other aspect of your FOIA request, excluding the release determination, from VBA's FOIA Public Liaison and/or Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) as provided below:

VBA FOIA Public Liaison
Email Address: FOIA.VBACO@va.gov
Fax: (202) 495-5567
VBA FOIA Office (20M3)
810 Vermont Avenue
Washington D.C. 20420

Office of Government Information Services
Email: ogis@nara.gov
Mailing Address: Office of Government Information Services
National Archives and Records Administration
8601 Adelphi Road (OGIS)
College Park, MD 20740-6001

Thank you for your interest in VA. If you have any further questions, please contact me at (202) 374-7826 or email the FOIA Public Liaison at FOIA.VBACO@va.gov, and reference your FOIA number 26-20149-F.

Sincerely,

Abraham Olaiseh
VBACO FOIA Officer

Enclosed: 53 pages

From: VAVBAWAS/CO/Chief of Staff
Sent: Fri, 27 Mar 2026 12:58:48 +0000
To: VAVBAWAS/CO/OFO; VAVBAWAS/CO/VR&E; VAVBAWAS/CO/HCS
Subject: Freedom 250 Challenge Update

Recently VBA announced Freedom 250 Challenges that will be taking place over the coming months:

1. **Backlog Reduction:** Achieve the lowest backlog in VA history
    - Goal: 64,782 claims (or less!) in the backlog
2. **Positive Outcomes:** Help more Veterans achieve their life goals than this time last year
    - Goal: 9,050 positive outcomes in VR&E
3. **VR&E Hiring:** Strengthen our workforce where Veterans need us most
    - Goal: 328 VR&E personnel hired

To ensure equity for all eligible participants, VBA is updating how employee contributions toward these goals will be recognized, reinforcing a culture where hard work is acknowledged and fairly rewarded.

If VBA successfully meets the Freedom 250 goals by June 30, 2026, eligible employees will receive **8 hours of time off** in recognition of their efforts.

Additional details on these challenges and eligibility criteria will be shared soon.

Thank you for your continued dedication and commitment to serving Veterans. Your efforts are making a meaningful difference, and we look forward to recognizing your contributions.

From: (b)(6) VBAVACO
Sent: Wed, 18 Mar 2026 11:05:51 -0400
To: (b)(6) VBAVACO; (b)(6); (b)(6), VBAVACO; Heath, (b)(6) VBAVACO; Lofgren, (b)(6) VBADENV
Subject: Fw: Backlog Milestones

For discussion, either during our morning meeting or I can set up a separate 30 minutes.

(b)(6) Front Office is planning to develop a comms plan for Freedom 250 (to date, they have not reached back out to me)

My take is that there are 3 parts to the comms plan:

- A mention on the DUSB call immediately following the achievement
- an "achievement" message from the front office immediately after meeting a goal, with words on the status of other goals and encouragement to staff, as I anticipate the hiring goal and positive outcomes goal will be down to the wire through June 30th.
- O/a July 4, a press release highlighting achievements (including 250 achievements where applicable, as well as any other notable improvements in service delivery (best ever, best since date, greater than last year type milestones)

Decision Point #1: RO level celebrations. I do not anticipate OFO coordinating RO events/celebrations (and defer to front office if they want to host something for CO) but please let me know if you all feel differently.

Decision Point #2: Rather than RO celebrations, do we announce RO superlatives on the DUSB call? For backlog, this could be things like: "Most backlog claims completed between Feb 1 - target date", "most backlog completions as a % of target", "the last mile - awarded to the station who completed the last backlog claim to get us to the milestone" we could create similar ones for VRE hiring and positive outcomes.

Other actions:
Additionally, we need to get word to the field through supplemental guidance, to indicate who is eligible for the challenge. I have sent a note to Lisa, et al under a separate cover.

(b)(6)

From: (b)(6) @va.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, March 10, 2026 1:48 PM
To: (b)(6) @va.gov>
Cc: (b)(6) VBAVACO (b)(6) @va.gov> (b)(6) (b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6)

(b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6)
VBACO_COMMS_Supervisors <(b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6)
VBAVACO (b)(6) (b)(6) M., VBAVACO (b)(6)
Subject: RE: Backlog Milestones

Hi (b)(6)

Thanks for reaching out! Adding (b)(6) team too. We haven't done a comms plan for Freedom 250 but could develop one if you all can help us understand when we'd meet all of three of the milestones. We should also incorporate any other activities that you all have been working on for 250—are Regional Offices holding any events or celebrations? And (b)(6), we should also determine who should be updating MD on activities/progress and in what forum (you all may already be doing this).

(b)(6) and team will reach out on next steps RE: comms plan. Thanks!

(b)(6)
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Deputy Chief of Staff, Strategic Planning and Analysis
Veterans Benefits Administration
m: (b)(6)
(b)(6)

From: (b)(6) (b)(6)
Sent: Tuesday, March 10, 2026 8:30 AM
To: (b)(6) (b)(6)
Cc (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6)
(b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6)
Subject: Backlog Milestones

(b)(6), good afternoon,

In our recent briefing to the DEPSEC on backlog reduction, he requested that ensure that the "communications engine" was up and running on backlog - to ensure there was awareness at the senior levels of VBA leadership on the likelihood of meeting the Freedom 250 backlog challenge (both ahead of meeting the milestone and if we actually meet the mark).

In the past, I have notified (b)(6) or (b)(6) directly regarding anticipated dates for achieve milestones (such as 100K) to support draft press releases. Based on the current models, it seems like our best chance of meeting the milestone is likely in the late April to mid-May timeframe.

I expect there is already communications planning ongoing for Freedom 250, both internal to and outside of VBA, however, I wanted to flag that OFO will start to add talking points to the OSVA slide in the run up to the milestone (likely in the early April

timeframe), and speak to any headwinds or adjustments to the forecast. As you know, the goal is to achieve the record, but bounce back to a steady state above that record level (still anticipated to be ~75K (as reflected in the FY27 budget documents)).

Let me know if you have any questions or would like to

Thank you,

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Senior Management Advisor
Office of Field Operations, Veterans Benefits Administration
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

(b)(6)

From: VAVBAWAS/CO/OFO
Sent: Fri, 27 Mar 2026 14:35:42 +0000
To: Office of Field Operations - Communications
Cc: VAVBAWAS/CO/OFO
Subject: FW: Freedom 250 Challenge Update

(b)(6)

March 27, 2026

Good morning,

For your awareness and action as necessary.

Thank you,

Office of Field Operations
Veterans Benefits Administration
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

VA | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

SSR

PRE-DECISIONAL

From: VAVBAWAS/CO/Chief of Staff (b)(6)
Sent: Friday, March 27, 2026 7:59 AM
To: VAVBAWAS/CO/OFO (b)(6) VAVBAWAS/CO/VR&E (b)(6)
VAVBAWAS/CO/(b)(6) (b)(6)
Subject: Freedom 250 Challenge Update

Recently VBA announced Freedom 250 Challenges that will be taking place over the coming months:

1. **Backlog Reduction:** Achieve the lowest backlog in VA history
    - Goal: 64,782 claims (or less!) in the backlog
2. **Positive Outcomes:** Help more Veterans achieve their life goals than this time last year
    - Goal: 9,050 positive outcomes in VR&E
3. **VR&E Hiring:** Strengthen our workforce where Veterans need us most
    - Goal: 328 VR&E personnel hired

To ensure equity for all eligible participants, VBA is updating how employee contributions toward these goals will be recognized, reinforcing a culture where hard work is acknowledged and fairly rewarded.

If VBA successfully meets the Freedom 250 goals by June 30, 2026, eligible employees will receive **8 hours of time off** in recognition of their efforts.

Additional details on these challenges and eligibility criteria will be shared soon.

Thank you for your continued dedication and commitment to serving Veterans. Your efforts are making a meaningful difference, and we look forward to recognizing your contributions.

From: (b)(6) VBAVACO
Sent: Mon, 23 Mar 2026 13:04:19 +0000
To: (b)(6)
Cc: (b)(6) VBAVACO; (b)(6) VBAVACO; VAVBAWAS/CO/OFO; (b)(6) VBAVACO; (b)(6)
Subject: FW: Freedom 250 Challenge: Updated Reward
Attachments: Freedom 250 Challenge Update March 2026 v3 FINAL.docx

Hi team,

Recommend releasing through OFO and to VR&E—we will also need HCS, right? Anyone else?

(b)(6)
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Deputy Chief of Staff, Strategic Planning and Analysis
Veterans Benefits Administration
m: (b)(6)
(b)(6)

From: (b)(6) VBAVACO (b)(6)
Sent: Sunday, March 22, 2026 1:56 PM
To: (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) VBAVACO (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6)
Cc: (b)(6) VBAVACO (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) VBAVACO (b)(6)
Subject: RE: Freedom 250 Challenge: Updated Reward

I recommend the changes as shown in the attached.

From: (b)(6) VBAVACO (b)(6)
Sent: Friday, March 20, 2026 4:09 PM
To: (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6)
Cc: (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) VBAVACO (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) L. VBAVACO (b)(6) (b)(6) VBAVACO (b)(6)
Subject: Freedom 250 Challenge: Updated Reward

Good afternoon,

Please see updated messaging regarding the Freedom 250 Challenges reward for VBA for your review and approval. OFO reviewed and approved (b)(6)

Upon your approval, we will work with OFO and component offices to distribute to the offices which are eligible for the reward. Thank you!

(b)(6)
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Deputy Chief of Staff, Strategic Planning and Analysis
Veterans Benefits Administration
(b)(6)

From: VAVBAWAS/CO/USBVBAALLUSERS <USBAll(b)(6)
Sent: Friday, March 6, 2026 11:44 AM
To: VbaVbaAllUsers (b)(6)
Subject: Freedom 250 Challenge



Dear VBA Team,

This July 4th will mark the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. The historic milestone is an opportunity to pause and reflect on the many contributions Americans have had on our country. For us at VBA, it's an opportunity to double down on the commitment we make every day – to care for Veterans and survivors.

Because of that commitment, VBA has driven the disability claims backlog down to **fewer than 100,000 claims**—an achievement that reflects sustained focus, innovation, and accountability. Since January 20, 2025, VA has reduced the backlog by more than **164,000 claims**, while also improving how quickly and accurately we deliver decisions to Veterans and survivors.

As we reflect on our past and strengthen our love of country on its journey toward becoming a more perfect union, I am proud to announce Freedom 250 Challenges for VBA employees that reflect our shared commitment to serving those who served.

1. **Backlog Reduction: Achieve the lowest backlog in VA history**
   Right now, we are at just below 100K. VA reached the lowest disability backlog ever of 64,783 claims during President Trump's first term. Our Freedom 250 goal is to beat that historic low, reinforcing our promise to deliver timely, accurate benefits to Veterans and survivors.
   Goal: 64,782 claims (or less!) in the backlog

2. **Positive Outcomes: Help 950 more Veterans achieve their life goals than this time last year**
   From February 1 through June 30, 2025, VA helped Veterans achieve more than 8,100 Positive Outcomes related to employment and independent living in the Veteran Readiness

and Employment (VR&E) program. Positive outcomes include the Veteran obtaining employment, pursuing additional training, or continuing to live independently despite their disabilities. On the run-up to America's 250th birthday, we are challenging ourselves to help 950 more Veterans than last year achieve their goals.

Goal: 9,050 positive outcomes in VR&E

3. **VR&E Hiring: Strengthen our workforce where Veterans need us most**
   VA will hire more than 300 vocational rehabilitation counselors and vocational rehabilitation specialists as part of our Freedom 250 Challenge to reduce the nationwide counselor case load by an average of 48 cases per counselor, directly improving the Veteran experience and ensuring VR&E continues delivering high-quality, timely services.
   Goal: 328 VR&E personnel hired

These challenges are ambitious by design—but they are achievable because of you. Your professionalism, resilience, and commitment have already shown what VBA can accomplish when we stay focused on results for Veterans.

As a celebration of each of these achievements, eligible employees will receive **10 days of telework** if their goal is achieved by June 30, 2026! More details will be coming soon from your supervisor on

Subject: Freedom 250 Challenge Update

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If VBA successfully meets the Freedom 250 goals by June 30, 2026, eligible employees will receive **8 hours of time off** in recognition of their efforts.

Additional details on these challenges and eligibility criteria will be shared soon.

Thank you for your continued dedication and commitment to serving Veterans. Your efforts are making a meaningful difference, and we look forward to recognizing your contributions.

From: VAVBAWAS/CO/OFO
Sent: Mon, 23 Mar 2026 13:27:47 +0000
To: (b)(6), VBAVACO
Cc: VAVBAWAS/CO/OFO; Office of Field Operations - Communications
Subject: RE: Freedom 250 Challenge: Updated Reward
Attachments: Freedom 250 Challenge Update March 2026 v3 FINAL.docx

(b)(6)

Good morning (b)(6)

Forwarding for awareness – Per below, DCOS sent this to OUSB (cc'd Lisa) and recommends releasing through OFO and to VR&E. Will update as soon as we hear from OUSB.

Thanks!

(b)(6)
Program Analyst
Office of Field Operations
Veterans Benefits Administration
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
/dja/

VA | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Contents of this email are considered pre-decisional unless explicitly noted.

From: (b)(6) (b)(6)
Sent: Monday, March 23, 2026 9:14 AM
To: (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6)
Cc: (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) VAVBAWAS/CO/OFO (b)(6) (b)(6) M., VBAVACO (b)(6) (b)(6) . VBAVACO (b)(6)
Subject: RE: Freedom 250 Challenge: Updated Reward

(b)(6) for awareness

Regards,
(b)(6)
Director
Office of Communication | VBA
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

(b)(6)

From: (b)(6) (b)(6)
Sent: Monday, March 23, 2026 9:04 AM
To: (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6)
Cc: (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6)
VAVBAWAS/CO/OFO (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6)
(b)(6) (b)(6)
Subject: FW: Freedom 250 Challenge: Updated Reward

Hi team,

Recommend releasing through OFO and to VR&E—we will also need HCS, right? Anyone else?

(b)(6)
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Deputy Chief of Staff, Strategic Planning and Analysis
Veterans Benefits Administration
(b)(6)

From: (b)(6) (b)(6)
Sent: Sunday, March 22, 2026 1:56 PM
To: (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) VBAVACO
(b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6)
Cc: (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6)
(b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6)
(b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6)
(b)(6) (b)(6)
Subject: RE: Freedom 250 Challenge: Updated Reward

I recommend the changes as shown in the attached.

From: (b)(6) (b)(6)
Sent: Friday, March 20, 2026 4:09 PM
To: (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6)
Cc: Terrell, Brandye, VBAVACO (b)(6) (b)(6) VBAVACO
(b)(6) (b)(6)) (b)(6)
(b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6)
(b)(6) (b)(6) b)(6) (b)(6)
VBAVACO (b)(6)
Subject: Freedom 250 Challenge: Updated Reward

Good afternoon,

Please see updated messaging regarding the Freedom 250 Challenges reward for VBA for your review and approval. OFO reviewed and approved (Lisa).

Upon your approval, we will work with OFO and component offices to distribute to the offices which are eligible for the reward. Thank you!

(b)(6)

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Deputy Chief of Staff, Strategic Planning and Analysis
Veterans Benefits Administration

(b)(6)

From: VAVBAWAS/CO/USBVBAALLUSERS <USBAllUsers@va.gov>
Sent: Friday, March 6, 2026 11:44 AM
To: VbaVbaAllUsers <VbaVbaAllUsers@va.gov>
Subject: Freedom 250 Challenge



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make every day – to care for Veterans and survivors.

Because of that commitment, VBA has driven the disability claims backlog down to **fewer than 100,000 claims**—an achievement that reflects sustained focus, innovation, and accountability. Since January 20, 2025, VA has reduced the backlog by more than **164,000 claims**, while also improving how quickly and accurately we deliver decisions to Veterans and survivors.

As we reflect on our past and strengthen our love of country on its journey toward becoming a more perfect union, I am proud to announce Freedom 250 Challenges for VBA employees that reflect our shared commitment to serving those who served.

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2. **Positive Outcomes: Help 950 more Veterans achieve their life goals than this time last year**

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Goal: 9,050 positive outcomes in VR&E

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   Goal: 328 VR&E personnel hired

These challenges are ambitious by design—but they are achievable because of you. Your professionalism, resilience, and commitment have already shown what VBA can accomplish when we stay focused on results for Veterans.

As a celebration of each of these achievements, eligible employees will receive **10 days of telework** if their goal is achieved by June 30, 2026! More details will be coming soon from your supervisor on terms and conditions and who is eligible for this reward.

Together, we will continue to honor America's past, strengthen its present, and serve Veterans with the excellence they have earned into the future.

J. Margarita Devlin
Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Benefits
Performing the Delegable Duties of the Under Secretary for Benefits

Subject: Freedom 250 Challenge Update

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If VBA successfully meets the Freedom 250 goals by June 30, 2026, eligible employees will receive **8 hours of time off** in recognition of their efforts.

Additional details on these challenges and eligibility criteria will be shared soon.

Thank you for your continued dedication and commitment to serving Veterans. Your efforts are making a meaningful difference, and we look forward to recognizing your contributions.

From: (b)(6)
Sent: Tue, 24 Mar 2026 19:07:07 +0000
To: (b)(6) VBAVACO (b)(6) . (b)(6) VBAVACO; (b)(6)
Cc: (b)(6) VBAVACO; (b)(6) L. VBAVACO; VAVBAWAS/CO/OFO; (b)(6) VBAVACO; (b)(6)
Subject: RE: Freedom 250 Challenge: Updated Reward

Good afternoon,

I just spoke with (b)(6), and he believes that the comms should come from either OER or the HCS mailbox rather than the PDUSB mailbox. Apologies for the change.

Please let me know if I can provide additional information.

Thank you,

(b)(6)
Acting Executive Management Officer
Office of the Under Secretary for Benefits
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
(b)(6)

From: (b)(6)
Sent: Monday, March 23, 2026 1:48 PM
To: (b)(6) L. VBAVACO (b)(6) (b)(6) VBAVACO (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6)
Cc: (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) VAVBAWAS/CO/OFO (b)(6) (b)(6) M., VBAVACO (b)(6)
Subject: RE: Freedom 250 Challenge: Updated Reward

Good afternoon,

Thanks, I spoke to (b)(6) and he is good with the comms coming from the PDUSB box. We will send to OFO, VR&E and HCS.

Thank you,

(b)(6)
Acting Executive Management Officer
Office of the Under Secretary for Benefits
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
(b)(6)

(b)(6)

From: (b)(6) VBAVACO (b)(6)
Sent: Monday, March 23, 2026 1:40 PM

To: (b)(6) A. (b)(6) (b)(6) L. VBAVACO (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6)
Cc: (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) VAVBAWAS/CO/OFO (b)(6) (b)(6) M., VBAVACO (b)(6)
Subject: RE: Freedom 250 Challenge: Updated Reward

Thanks, (b)(6) for including me.

(b)(6) VBAVACO Yes, we need to include HCS.

Thank you.
(b)(6)
Acting Executive Director
Veteran Readiness & Employment
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

From: (b)(6) (b)(6) @va.gov>
Sent: Monday, March 23, 2026 9:14 AM
To: (b)(6) VBAVACO (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6)
Cc: (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) VAVBAWAS/CO/OFO (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6)
Subject: RE: Freedom 250 Challenge: Updated Reward

+(b)(6) for awareness

Regards,
(b)(6)
Director
Office of Communication | VBA
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Pre-decisional

From: (b)(6) . VBAVACO (b)(6) @va.gov>
Sent: Monday, March 23, 2026 9:04 AM
To: (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6)
Cc: (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) VAVBAWAS/CO/OFO (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) . (b)(6)
Subject: FW: Freedom 250 Challenge: Updated Reward

Hi team,

Recommend releasing through OFO and to VR&E—we will also need HCS, right? Anyone else?

(b)(6)

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Deputy Chief of Staff, Strategic Planning and Analysis
Veterans Benefits Administration
(b)(6)

From: (b)(6) VBAVACO (b)(6) @va.gov>
Sent: Sunday, March 22, 2026 1:56 PM
To: Jessup, Jennifer L. VBAVACO (b)(6) (b)(6) VBAVACO (b)(6) Sirhal, Timothy (b)(6)
Cc: (b)(6) VBAVACO (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) VBAVACO (b)(6) VBAVACO (b)(6)
Subject: RE: Freedom 250 Challenge: Updated Reward

I recommend the changes as shown in the attached.

From: J (b)(6) (b)(6) @va.gov>
Sent: Friday, March 20, 2026 4:09 PM
To: (b)(6) VBAVACO (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6)
Cc: (b)(6) VBAVACO (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) el F (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) P (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) VBAVACO (b)(6)
Subject: Freedom 250 Challenge: Updated Reward

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(b)(6)
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Deputy Chief of Staff, Strategic Planning and Analysis
Veterans Benefits Administration
(b)(6)

From: VAVBAWAS/CO/USBVBAALLUSERS <USBAllUsers@va.gov>
Sent: Friday, March 6, 2026 11:44 AM

To: VbaVbaAllUsers (b)(6)
Subject: Freedom 250 Challenge



Dear VBA Team,

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2. **Positive Outcomes: Help 950 more Veterans achieve their life goals than this time last year**
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Goal: 9,050 positive outcomes in VR&E

3. **VR&E Hiring: Strengthen our workforce where Veterans need us most**
   VA will hire more than 300 vocational rehabilitation counselors and vocational rehabilitation specialists as part of our Freedom 250 Challenge to reduce the nationwide counselor case load by an average of 48 cases per counselor, directly improving the Veteran experience and ensuring VR&E continues delivering high-quality, timely services.
   Goal: 328 VR&E personnel hired

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J. Margarita Devlin
Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Benefits

Performing the Delegable Duties of the Under Secretary for Benefits

From: VAVBAWAS/CO/OFO
Sent: Mon, 23 Mar 2026 17:51:58 +0000
To: (b)(6) VBAVACO
Cc: VAVBAWAS/CO/OFO; Office of Field Operations - Communications
Subject: RE: Freedom 250 Challenge: Updated Reward

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Per our discussion, here's the latest update so far from OUSB.

Thanks!

(b)(6)

Program Analyst
Office of Field Operations
Veterans Benefits Administration
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
/dja/

VA | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

(b)(6)

From: (b)(6) <(b)(6)@va.gov>
Sent: Monday, March 23, 2026 1:48 PM
To: (b)(6) VBAVACO (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) VBAVACO (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6)
Cc: (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) AVACO (b)(6) VAVBAWAS/CO/OFO (b)(6) , VBAVACO (b)(6)
Subject: RE: Freedom 250 Challenge: Updated Reward

Good afternoon,

Thanks, I spoke to (b)(6) and he is good with the comms coming from the PDUSB box. We will send to OFO, VR&E and HCS.

Thank you,

(b)(6)

Acting Executive Management Officer
Office of the Under Secretary for Benefits
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

(b)(6)

Pre-decisional

From: (b)(6) @va.gov>
Sent: Monday, March 23, 2026 1:40 PM
To: (b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) VBAVACO (b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) @va.gov>
Cc: (b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) @va.gov>; VAVBAWAS/CO/OFO (b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) @va.gov>
Subject: RE: Freedom 250 Challenge: Updated Reward

Thanks, (b)(6) for including me.

(b)(6) VBAVACO Yes, we need to include HCS.

Thank you.
(b)(6)
Acting Executive Director
Veteran Readiness & Employment
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

From: (b)(6) @va.gov>
Sent: Monday, March 23, 2026 9:14 AM
To: (b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) (b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) @va.gov>
Cc: (b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) @va.gov>; VAVBAWAS/CO/OFO (b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) @va.gov>
Subject: RE: Freedom 250 Challenge: Updated Reward

(b)(6) for awareness

Regards,
(b)(6)
Director
Office of Communication | VBA
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
(b)(6)

From: (b)(6) @va.gov>
Sent: Monday, March 23, 2026 9:04 AM
To: (b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) @va.gov>
Cc: (b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) @va.gov>; VAVBAWAS/CO/OFO (b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) @va.gov>
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(b)(6)
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Deputy Chief of Staff, Strategic Planning and Analysis
Veterans Benefits Administration
(b)(6)

From: (b)(6) @va.gov>
Sent: Sunday, March 22, 2026 1:56 PM
To: (b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) (b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) @va.gov>
Cc: (b)(6) @va.gov> (b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) @va.gov>
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Sent: Friday, March 20, 2026 4:09 PM
To: (b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) @va.gov>
Cc: (b)(6) @va.gov> (b)(6) VBAVACO (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6); (b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) (b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) (b)(6) @va.gov>
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(b)(6)
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Deputy Chief of Staff, Strategic Planning and Analysis
Veterans Benefits Administration
(b)(6)

(b)(6)

From: VAVBAWAS/CO/USBVBAALLUSERS <USBAllUsers@va.gov>
Sent: Friday, March 6, 2026 11:44 AM
To: VbaVbaAllUsers <VbaVbaAllUsers@va.gov>
Subject: Freedom 250 Challenge



Dear VBA Team,

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Goal: 9,050 positive outcomes in VR&E

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J. Margarita Devlin
Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Benefits
Performing the Delegable Duties of the Under
Secretary for Benefits

From: (b)(6)
Sent: Mon, 23 Mar 2026 13:13:44 +0000
To: (b)(6) VBAVACO;(b)(6)
Cc: (b)(6) VBAVACO;(b)(6) VBAVACO; VAVBAWAS/CO/OFO;
(b)(6) VBAVACO
Subject: RE: Freedom 250 Challenge: Updated Reward

(b)(6) for awareness

Regards,
(b)(6)
Director
Office of Communication | VBA
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
(b)(6)

From: (b)(6) @va.gov>
Sent: Monday, March 23, 2026 9:04 AM
To: (b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) @va.gov>
Cc: (b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) @va.gov>;
VAVBAWAS/CO/OFO (b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) @va.gov>;
(b)(6) @va.gov>
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Deputy Chief of Staff, Strategic Planning and Analysis
Veterans Benefits Administration
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Sent: Sunday, March 22, 2026 1:56 PM
To: (b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) VBAVACO
(b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) @va.gov>
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va.gov>; (b)(6) @va.gov>;
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Sent: Friday, March 20, 2026 4:09 PM
To: (b)(6) @va.gov> (b)(6) @va.gov>
Cc: (b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) VBAVACO (b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) ; (b)(6) .
@va.gov>; va.gov>; (b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6)
va.gov>; (b)(6) @va.gov> (b)(6)
VBAVACO (b)(6) @va.gov>
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U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Deputy Chief of Staff, Strategic Planning and Analysis
Veterans Benefits Administration
(b)(6)

From: VAVBAWAS/CO/USBVBAALLUSERS <USBAllUsers@va.gov>
Sent: Friday, March 6, 2026 11:44 AM
To: VbaVbaAllUsers <VbaVbaAllUsers@va.gov>
Subject: Freedom 250 Challenge



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J. Margarita Devlin
Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Benefits
Performing the Delegable Duties of the Under Secretary for Benefits

From: (b)(6) VBAVACO
Sent: Mon, 23 Mar 2026 17:40:09 +0000
To: (b)(6) (b)(6) VBAVACO; (b)(6) Rachel F
Cc: (b)(6) VBAVACO; (b)(6) VBAVACO; VAVBAWAS/CO/OFO; (b)(6) VBAVACO
Subject: RE: Freedom 250 Challenge: Updated Reward

Thanks, (b)(6) for including me.

(b)(6) VBAVACO Yes, we need to include HCS.

Thank you.

(b)(6)
Acting Executive Director
Veteran Readiness & Employment
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

From: (b)(6) @va.gov>
Sent: Monday, March 23, 2026 9:14 AM
To: (b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) <(b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) @va.gov>
Cc: (b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) L. VBAVACO <(b)(6) @va.gov>; VAVBAWAS/CO/OFO <(b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) @va.gov>
Subject: RE: Freedom 250 Challenge: Updated Reward

(b)(6) for awareness

Regards,

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Office of Communication | VBA
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
(b)(6)

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Deputy Chief of Staff, Strategic Planning and Analysis
Veterans Benefits Administration
(b)(6)

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Sent: Sunday, March 22, 2026 1:56 PM
To: (b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) <(b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) @va.gov>
Cc: (b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) 2@va.gov>; (b)(6) @va.gov>; va.gov>; (b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) @va.gov>
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Sent: Friday, March 20, 2026 4:09 PM
To: (b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) @va.gov>
Cc: (b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) VBAVACO (b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) >; (b)(6) @va.gov>; @va.gov>; (b)(6) @va.gov>; va.gov>; (b)(6) 2@va.gov>; (b)(6) (b)(6) @va.gov>
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Deputy Chief of Staff, Strategic Planning and Analysis
Veterans Benefits Administration
(b)(6)

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J. Margarita Devlin
Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Benefits

Performing the Delegable Duties of the Under Secretary for Benefits

From: (b)(6)
Sent: Mon, 23 Mar 2026 17:47:55 +0000
To: (b)(6) VBAVACO; (b)(6); (b)(6) VBAVACO; (b)(6)
Cc: (b)(6) VBAVACO; (b)(6) L. VBAVACO; VAVBAWAS/CO/OFO; (b)(6) VBAVACO
Subject: RE: Freedom 250 Challenge: Updated Reward

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Thank you,

(b)(6)
Acting Executive Management Officer
Office of the Under Secretary for Benefits
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
(b)(6)

From (b)(6) @va.gov>
Sent: Monday, March 23, 2026 1:40 PM
To (b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) L. VBAVACO (b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) @va.gov> (b)(6) (b)(6) @va.gov>
Cc (b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) @va.gov>; VAVBAWAS/CO/OFO (b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) s@va.gov>
Subject: RE: Freedom 250 Challenge: Updated Reward

Thanks, Cat for including me.

(b)(6) Yes, we need to include HCS.

Thank you.

(b)(6)
Acting Executive Director
Veteran Readiness & Employment
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

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(b)(6) @va.gov>
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VAVBAWAS/CO/OFO <(b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) @va.gov>;
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U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Deputy Chief of Staff, Strategic Planning and Analysis
Veterans Benefits Administration
(b)(6)

From: (b)(6) @va.gov>
Sent: Sunday, March 22, 2026 1:56 PM
To: (b)(6) @va.gov> (b)(6)
<Margarita.Devlin1@va.gov>; (b)(6) @va.gov>
(b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) @va.gov>;
(b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) @va.gov>;
a.gov> (b)(6) @va.gov>;
(b)(6) @va.gov>
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Subject: Freedom 250 Challenge: Updated Reward

Good afternoon,

Please see updated messaging regarding the Freedom 250 Challenges reward for VBA for your review and approval. OFO reviewed and approved (b)(6)

Upon your approval, we will work with OFO and component offices to distribute to the offices which are eligible for the reward. Thank you!

(b)(6)

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Deputy Chief of Staff, Strategic Planning and Analysis
Veterans Benefits Administration

(b)(6)

From: VAVBAWAS/CO/USBVBAALLUSERS <USBAllUsers@va.gov>
Sent: Friday, March 6, 2026 11:44 AM
To: VbaVbaAllUsers <VbaVbaAllUsers@va.gov>
Subject: Freedom 250 Challenge



Dear VBA Team,

This July 4th will mark the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. The historic milestone is an opportunity to pause and reflect on the many contributions Americans have had on our country. For us at VBA, it's an opportunity to double down on the commitment we make every day – to care for Veterans and survivors.

Because of that commitment, VBA has driven the disability claims backlog down to **fewer than 100,000 claims**—an achievement that reflects sustained focus, innovation, and accountability. Since January 20, 2025, VA has reduced the backlog by more than **164,000 claims**, while also improving how quickly and accurately we deliver decisions to Veterans and survivors.

As we reflect on our past and strengthen our love of country on its journey toward becoming a more perfect union, I am proud to announce Freedom 250 Challenges for VBA employees that reflect our shared commitment to serving those who served.

1. **Backlog Reduction: Achieve the lowest backlog in VA history**
   Right now, we are at just below 100K. VA reached the lowest disability backlog ever of 64,783 claims during President Trump's first term. Our Freedom 250 goal is to beat that historic low, reinforcing our promise to deliver timely, accurate benefits to Veterans and survivors.

Goal: 64,782 claims (or less!) in the backlog

2. **Positive Outcomes: Help 950 more Veterans achieve their life goals than this time last year**
   From February 1 through June 30, 2025, VA helped Veterans achieve more than 8,100 Positive Outcomes related to employment and independent living in the Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E) program. Positive outcomes include the Veteran obtaining employment, pursuing additional training, or continuing to live independently despite their disabilities. On the run-up to America's 250th birthday, we are challenging ourselves to help 950 more Veterans than last year achieve their goals.
   Goal: 9,050 positive outcomes in VR&E

3. **VR&E Hiring: Strengthen our workforce where Veterans need us most**
   VA will hire more than 300 vocational rehabilitation counselors and vocational rehabilitation specialists as part of our Freedom 250 Challenge to reduce the nationwide counselor case load by an average of 48 cases per counselor, directly improving the Veteran experience and ensuring VR&E continues delivering high-quality, timely services.
   Goal: 328 VR&E personnel hired

These challenges are ambitious by design—but they are achievable because of you. Your professionalism, resilience, and commitment have already shown what VBA can accomplish when we stay focused on results for Veterans.

As a celebration of each of these achievements, eligible employees will receive **10 days of telework** if their goal is achieved by June 30, 2026! More details will be coming soon from your supervisor on terms and conditions and who is eligible for this reward.

Together, we will continue to honor America's past, strengthen its present, and serve Veterans with the excellence they have earned into the future.

J. Margarita Devlin
Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Benefits
Performing the Delegable Duties of the Under Secretary for Benefits

From: VAVBAWAS/CO/OFO
Sent: Fri, 20 Mar 2026 15:29:18 +0000
To: (b)(6) AVACO
Cc: . VBAVACO; VAVBAWAS/CO/OFO
Subject: RE: Please Review: Updated Freedom 250 Challenge Reward Message
Attachments: Freedom 250 Challenge Update March 2026 v2.docx

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

DCOS is requesting (b)(6) to review the attached message regarding the Freedom 250 Challenge reward—from TW to **8 hours of time off**. They'd like to send this message out today.

Thinking the response will come from Sandy herself, but just forwarding for awareness/reference unless HR's input is needed. Just let me know.

Thanks!

(b)(6)
Program Analyst
Office of Field Operations
Veterans Benefits Administration
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
/dja/

VA | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

(b)(6)

From: (b)(6) @va.gov>
Sent: Friday, March 20, 2026 10:29 AM
To (b)(6) @va.gov>
Cc: VAVBAWAS/CO/OFO (b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) @va.gov>; (b)(6) @va.gov>
Subject: Please Review: Updated Freedom 250 Challenge Reward Message

Hi (b)(6)

Will your team please review the attached message? It's a written update to employees regarding the Freedom 250 Challenge reward—from TW to 8 hours of time off. Following your approval, I'll send it

forward for OUSB approval, then it will come back to you and other component offices to release as applicable to those offices that are eligible for the challenge.

We would like to send this message out today, so appreciate your quick review. Thank you!

(b)(6)
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Deputy Chief of Staff, Strategic Planning and Analysis
Veterans Benefits Administration
(b)(6)

Subject: Freedom 250 Challenge Update

Recently VBA announced Freedom 250 Challenges that will be taking place over the coming months:

1. **Backlog Reduction:** Achieve the lowest backlog in VA history
    - Goal: 64,782 claims (or less!) in the backlog
2. **Positive Outcomes:** Help 950 more Veterans achieve their life goals than this time last year
    - Goal: 9,050 positive outcomes in VR&E
3. **VR&E Hiring:** Strengthen our workforce where Veterans need us most
    - Goal: 328 VR&E personnel hired

These challenges are significant for both Veterans and employees, so we modified how VBA will reward employees who go above and beyond to help us reach these goals. As a celebration of achieving each of these challenges, eligible employees will now instead receive **8 hours of time off** if they achieve the goal by June 30, 2026!

Thank you for already diligently making progress and we look forward to celebrating with you.