

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Questions for the Record
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity
U.S. House of Representatives
Detrimental Delays: Reviewing Payment Failures in VA's Education Programs
December 16, 2025

Questions for the Record from Representative Hamadeh:

Question 1: FOR MS. MARGARITA DEVLIN (Acting Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Benefits, VA): We have heard plenty about the failures of the previous administration. There's a lot to work with there. Joe Biden was the worst president in our nation's history, full stop. But what I don't understand is why you chose to keep his policies in place.

You've had employees manually keying data into systems older than the students they're supposed to serve, you were spending \$25 million to maintain an outdated system, plus a nearly \$1 billion Accenture contract that isn't delivering. The VA is the one signing the checks and setting the policy.

1a. How many full-time employees were assigned to manually process these claims?

VA Response: A total of 452 Education Service employees manually reviewed and reconciled records for claims processing after VA's transition from the Benefits Delivery Network (BDN) platform.

1b. What were their pay grades?

VA Response: Claims processor pay grades range from GS-9 to GS-12, with direct oversight by GS-13 supervisory claims processors.

Question 2: FOR MS. MARGARITA DEVLIN (Acting Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Benefits, VA): Biden's VA was paying GS-13s and GS-14s six-figure salaries to do data entry that a computer should have handled in seconds, that's not a staffing solution. That's a jobs program for bureaucrats funded by delays to our veterans.

2a. You said these problems have been solved as of the date of the hearing (December 16, 2025), but why was VA paying premium prices for an archaic service?

VA Response: Prior to decommission, BDN was a decades-old mainframe system, largely written in the Common Business-Oriented Language (COBOL) programming language, used to process education claims. Since COBOL is a legacy language, the cost of maintaining a system written in the language is extremely high. It was imperative that VA move away from the aging BDN platform to the more efficient, agile Digital GI Bill (DGIB) processing system. The timing of the decommission of BDN saved VA an estimated \$25 million in annual information technology maintenance costs.

2b. Who specifically decided to manually punch data into archaic spreadsheets instead of using the automation we paid for? Please list all names and positions.

VA Response: The decision to manually review and reconcile records for claims processing was made prior to my arrival at VA as Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Benefits. This decision was made in consultation with prior Administration leadership, claims processing experts, and the DGIB contractor to mitigate the risk of improper payments. Unfortunately, VA underestimated the time required to reconcile the data.

Instead of "seconds to minutes," some reports indicate that claims took double the estimated time to process. As a result, the current leadership decided to accept the data as they were transferred from BDN without spending precious time manually reconciling the entire claims record.

2c. Was it you?

VA Response: No.

2d. During the hearing, you mentioned "accuracy," but 43 days pending for a claim isn't accuracy: it's negligence. When specifically (give me a date) did this manual data entry end?

VA Response: On September 18, 2025, the Veterans Benefits Administration directed claims processors to use BDN as the authoritative source for records converted from BDN.

**Department of Veterans Affairs
February 2026**