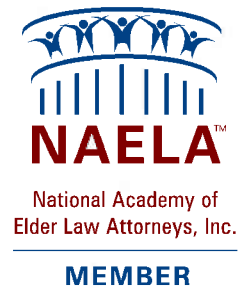


**Richard A. Courtney, CELA**  
**Certified Elder Law Attorney**  
**4400 Old Canton Road, Suite 220**  
**Jackson, Mississippi 39211**  
**601-987-3000 or 1-866-ELDERLAW**  
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## **New Hope for Long Awaited VA Reform**

A recent newsletter from Veterans for Common Sense (VCS) reveals that an overhaul of the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) may be a reality at last.

On February 4, VCS met with Congress. They challenged Congress to rebuild the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) broken claims system so that all veterans will receive, swiftly and fairly, the benefits they deserve.

Reform of the VA is overdue. Yet this time, the VA's response is heartening. VA Secretary Eric Shinseki promised VCS that fixing the broken VBA is one of his top priorities for 2010.

CBS recently aired a stirring and timely interview with Executive Director of VCS, Paul Sullivan. The broadcast made it clear just how overwhelmed and skewed the VA is. Sullivan revealed that VBA has a backlog of one million claims.

Having spent 6 years working for the VA analyzing trends in disability claims, Sullivan speaks with intimate knowledge of the failed system: "Veterans wait on average about 6 months to receive an initial answer on a disability claim. If the veteran disagrees with VA's decision, the veteran waits another 4 years. That is a crisis."

The VA can't keep up. The flood of disability claims from both young and aging vets is staggering. Inadequate military records make it impossible to prove cause of injuries. The paper system the VA uses is obsolete.

Our soldiers return home to delays and denials of help they desperately need. All too often, we hear of veterans who suffer as they await long overdue answers from the VA about their claims.

Now, VCS is on track to champion this long-overdue reform. VA Secretary Shinseki's promise of real changes to the failed VA system is good news indeed. The VCS indicated that it plans to hold him to it.

**For information and assistance regarding Veterans' Benefits for veterans or their spouses or widows, call Richard Courtney, an Accredited Attorney with the VA, at 866-ELDERLAW.**