

1,550 and annual burden by 11,067 hours.

Type of Review: Revision of a currently approved collection.

Affected Public: Individuals or households, and business or other for-profit organizations.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 1,590.

Estimated Time per Respondent: 7.87 hours.

Estimated Total Annual Burden Hours: 12,527.

The following paragraph applies to all of the collections of information covered by this notice:

An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless the collection of information displays a valid OMB control number. Books or records relating to a collection of information must be retained as long as their contents may become material in the administration of any internal revenue law. Generally, tax returns and tax return information are confidential, as required by 26 U.S.C. 6103.

Request for Comments: Comments submitted in response to this notice will be summarized and/or included in the request for OMB approval. All comments will become a matter of public record. Comments are invited on: (a) Whether the collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information shall have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden of the collection of information; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on respondents, including through the use of automated collection techniques or other forms of information technology; and (e) estimates of capital or start-up costs and costs of operation, maintenance, and purchase of services to provide information.

Approved: February 28, 2022.

Andres Garcia Leon,
Supervisory Tax Analyst.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

Treasury Advisory Committee on Racial Equity

AGENCY: Department of the Treasury.

ACTION: Notice of establishment of the Treasury Advisory Committee on Racial Equity.

SUMMARY: The Treasury Department has determined that it is in the public interest to establish the Treasury Advisory Committee on Racial Equity. A Charter for the Committee has been prepared and will be filed no earlier than 15 days following the date of publication of this notice.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Janis Bowdler, Counselor for Racial Equity, Department of the Treasury, (202) 622-3002, Equity@Treasury.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Pursuant to the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) (5 U.S.C. App., as amended), the Department of the Treasury ("Department") intends to establish the Treasury Advisory Committee on Racial Equity ("Committee"). The Department has determined that establishing this committee is necessary and in the public interest in order to carry out the provisions of Executive Order 13985, *Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Throughout the Federal Government*.

Objectives and Duties

The purpose of the Committee is to provide advice and recommendations to the Department of the Treasury to assist the Offices of the Secretary and Deputy Secretary in carrying out their duties and authorities towards advancing racial equity and addressing acute disparities for communities of color who have been historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by persistent poverty and inequality.

The Committee shall be a continuing advisory committee with an initial two-year term, subject to two-year re-authorizations at the discretion of the Secretary of the Treasury. The Committee will provide an opportunity for experts to offer their advice and recommendations to the Office of the Secretary on a regular basis on aspects of the domestic economy that have directly and indirectly resulted in unfavorable conditions for Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of color. Topics to be addressed by the Committee may include, but are not limited to, financial inclusion, capital access, housing stability, federal government supplier diversity and economic development.

The duties of the Committee shall be solely advisory and shall extend only to the submission of advice and recommendations to the Offices of the Secretary and Deputy Secretary, which shall be non-binding to the Department. No determination of fact or policy shall be made by the Committee.

Membership

In order to achieve a fairly balanced membership, the Committee shall include representatives from a wide range of views, such as the Federal government, financial services industry, state regulatory authorities, consumer or public advocacy organizations, community-based groups, academia, philanthropic organizations, as well as others focused on the advancement of equity priorities within the United States. Membership balance will not be static and may change, depending on the work of the Committee. The number of Committee members shall not exceed twenty-five.

The Committee shall meet at such intervals as are necessary to carry out its duties. It is estimated that the Committee will generally meet four times per year, virtually or in person. Generally, Committee meetings are open to the public. Nominations for membership will be solicited in a subsequent notice in the **Federal Register**.

Janis Bowdler,

Counselor for Racial Equity.

[FR Doc. 2022-04539 Filed 3-3-22; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Evidence and Notification Delays

AGENCY: Department of Veterans Affairs.

ACTION: Notice of extension of timeframes for notification letters.

SUMMARY: The Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) received notice that the vendor contracted to provide printing services to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) experienced staffing and equipment issues that resulted in a significant delay in the printing and mailing of benefit letters. To protect the interests of Veterans and other claimants affected by this delay, VBA is instituting temporary guidance extending a grace period on responses to time-sensitive letter notifications.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Raymond Tellez, Executive Director, Office of Business Integration, Department of Veterans Affairs, 810 Vermont Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20420, 202-461-9367. (This is not a toll-free number.)

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On August 12, 2021, the Office of Information and Technology informed VBA that the vendor, contracted to provide printing services to VA by the Government Publishing Office (GPO), experienced

staffing and equipment issues that resulted in a significant delay in the printing and mailing of letters sent through the Veterans Benefits Management System (VBMS) Package Manager or centralized printing. VBA was informed that since July 13, 2021, there were letters not timely mailed to Veterans and other claimants. This printing and mailing delay does not impact Insurance Service, Education Service or Loan Guaranty Service timeframes for applications, appeals or notifications. In addition, any automated “batch” letters have not been affected by this situation. VBA awarded a new contract on September 29, 2021, with full printing capability achieved by December 31, 2021. Any notification letters issued after this date will be printed and mailed timely.

The staffing and equipment issues impacted the ability of VBA to send timely notification letters to some claimants. Some of these letters require a claimant response within a set timeframe. Response periods are traditionally calculated based on the date of mailing and the date of the letter of notification is considered the date of mailing for this purpose. However, VBA is unable to ascertain the extent of delay between the date of the letter of notification and date of actual mailing of that letter for any given correspondence generated during the impacted period. As a result, some claimants may not be able to satisfy the required timeframe for response through no fault of their own due to printing and mailing delays. VA aims to protect the interests of claimants by extending a grace period on the timeframe for which claimants can respond to time-limited notification.

If a claimant does not reply to a time-limited notification generated during the period beginning July 13, 2021 and ending December 31, 2021, such as making an election of benefits or services, or reporting for a scheduled compensation and pension examination or scheduled hearing before VBA, VBA will not take adverse action to deny, reduce, or terminate benefits or services unless: (1) The claimant is contacted and there is documented notice of their right to respond; (2) the requested

information is received; or (3) the response period has lapsed after affording the claimant at least an additional 90 days to respond. To determine the length of the extended response period, VA considered the number of days the mail was delayed. While this number has varied, once a claimant has been afforded the original time span in the letter (generally 30 or 60 days) followed by an additional 90 days, the additional timeframe would cover the period of delay for all impacted notices. If deemed necessary, further extensions for the impacted population may be announced.

For Veterans who filed an appeal with the Board of Veterans’ Appeals (Board) please visit <https://www.bva.va.gov/> for information specific to Board correspondence, scheduled hearings at the Board and receiving your Board decision.

VA regulation 38 CFR 3.110 provides that, “[i]n computing the time limit for any action required of a claimant or beneficiary, including the filing of claims or evidence requested by VA, the first day of the specified period . . . shall be the date of mailing of notification to the claimant or beneficiary of the action required and the time limit therefor. The date of the letter of notification shall be considered the date of mailing for purposes of computing time limits.”

38 CFR 3.109(b) provides that time limits within which claimants or beneficiaries are required to act to perfect a claim or challenge an adverse VA decision may be extended for good cause shown. VA has determined that correspondence impacted by GPO printing vendor delays during the specified time frame serves as good cause to extend those time limits for correspondence generated during the impacted period.

38 CFR 3.103(b) (“Procedural due process and other rights”) provides guidance on the right to notice. In part, this regulation affirms that claimants are entitled to notice of any decision. Section 3.103(b)(2) states that no award of compensation, pension, or dependency and indemnity compensation shall be terminated, reduced, or otherwise adversely affected

unless the claimant has been provided a period of 60 days in which to submit evidence. Section 3.103(c) provides the general rules regarding submission of evidence.

VBA hereby gives notice that if a claimant for VBA benefits other than insurance, education, and loan guaranty benefits does not reply to a time-limited notification, such as making an election of benefits or services, or reporting for a scheduled compensation and pension examination or scheduled hearing before VBA issued via VBMS Package Manager or centralized printing from July 13, 2021 until December 31, 2021, then VA will automatically extend the response period at least 90 days.

In addition to publishing this notice in the **Federal Register**, and to ensure all impacted claimants are aware of this information, VA issued a press release on November 30, 2021, addressing these delays and the remedial steps described above. <https://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=5744>. Furthermore, on December 6, 2021, VA transmitted an email notice to claimants at their last known email addresses that informed them of the printing delay and the extended response period. Additionally, VBA intends to mail a letter to all claimants impacted by these delays that informs them of the extension outlined above. This letter will encourage claimants who anticipated receiving a time-sensitive letter notification but have not yet received one to contact VA at 1-800-827-1000.

Signing Authority

Denis McDonough, Secretary of Veterans Affairs, approved this document on February 27, 2022 and authorized the undersigned to sign and submit the document to the Office of the Federal Register for publication electronically as an official document of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Luvenia Potts,

Regulation Development Coordinator, Office of Regulation Policy & Management, Office of General Counsel, Department of Veterans Affairs.

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