

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 26, 2021

The Honorable David S. Ferriero
Archivist of the United States
National Archives and Records Administration
700 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20408

Dear Mr. Ferriero:

We write to express our increasing concern over the growing backlog of constituents' requests for military records at the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) in St. Louis, Missouri. Since mid-March 2020, the NPRC has been closed, with few exceptions, for weeks and months at a time due to COVID-19. The August 2, 2021 decision to significantly reduce operations comes amid a backlog of more than 500,000 routine records requests from constituents for copies of discharge documents, official military personnel files and service treatment records.

We appreciate the situation the NPRC faces given the volume of records that are paper files and which can only be accessed by on-site staff. That is why it is imperative that NPRC must be open and operational to serve our nations' veterans who need information only the NPRC can provide. The NPRC website cites the rising rates of COVID-19 in the St. Louis area as the reason the center has returned to pre-vaccine pandemic levels of operation. Most of America is open and operating thanks to three safe and effective vaccines. We urge you to get your facility fully reopened so veterans can have access to the records they need.

In order to better understand how the NPRC operates and how it plans to eliminate its backlog, please provide the following information:

1. What is the current rate of vaccination of NPRC employees?
2. What efforts are you undertaking to allow for NPRC employees to obtain vaccinations?
3. On March 3, 2021, you told members of Congress that the backlog you were experiencing included 482,000 requests, a number which grows at the rate of 10,000 per week. You noted that it would take "18-24 months of operating at full capacity with the additional planned resources in place to eliminate the entire backlog."
 - Please provide information about the current backlog, its projected weekly growth, and information detailing your plans to eliminate the backlog.

4. In order to expedite the delivery of documents to Congressional offices, has the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) and the NPRC considered either (1) the creation of an online portal to send scanned documents to Congressional offices, or (2) similar to the VA and other agencies, send password-protected documents directly to the staffer submitting an inquiry and providing an email with a separate password? If not, please explain your reasoning.
5. Please provide additional information about your requests to the U.S. Department of Defense and to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs for personnel and resources to help eliminate the backlog. If there are actions Congress can take to assist you in these matters, please list those as well.
6. Any other information you wish to provide to help us understand how the NPRC and NARA plan to respond to the pending backlog of constituents' requests and current conditions at the facility. We also suggest you widen your informative correspondence and updates on the NPRC's progress to all members.

We appreciate the NPRC and NARA employees, who under your leadership have responded to the emergent requests of our constituents since the onset of the pandemic. We would greatly appreciate a response by September 26, 2021.

Sincerely,



Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator



Gus Bilirakis
Member of Congress



John H. Rutherford
Member of Congress



Stephanie Murphy
Member of Congress



Carlos A. Gimenez
Member of Congress



Maria Elvira Salazar
Member of Congress



Michael Waltz
Member of Congress



Kat Cammack
Member of Congress



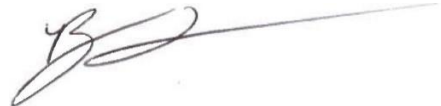
Neal P. Dunn, M.D.
Member of Congress



C. Scott Franklin
Member of Congress



Bill Posey
Member of Congress



Byron Donalds
Member of Congress



Darren Soto
Member of Congress



Mario Diaz-Balart
Member of Congress