

United States Senate

March 17, 2025

The Honorable Douglas A. Collins
Secretary of Veterans Affairs
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Ave NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Collins,

We write today regarding the continuing effects of the Los Angeles wildfires on our veterans and their families. As you are aware, the wildfires caused widespread destruction, forcing tens of thousands of individuals from their homes, including a significant number of veterans who rely on local resources and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) services for their health and well-being. We appreciate the rapid assistance the VA provided to this community in the immediate response to the wildfires. Unfortunately, while the fires have been extinguished, veterans will have ongoing needs for months if not years ahead.

Los Angeles County is home to the most veterans in the nation, and many of them will struggle to navigate the fires' aftermath. As a Navy veteran yourself, you know that veterans often face complex challenges that make the recovery from natural disasters even more complicated, including access to health care, housing, and mental health services. We write to urge the VA to prioritize the following actions as it continues to support veterans during this time of need:

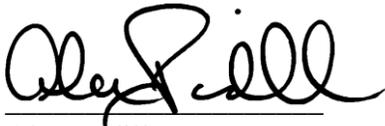
1. **Expedited Access to Emergency Care and Services:** Ensuring veterans affected by the fires can quickly access medical care, including mental health services, through VA facilities and community providers. We ask that the VA consider re-deploying a mobile Vet Center to the region to provide counseling, crisis intervention, and other necessary services for veterans impacted by this disaster if needed. In addition, for veterans who lost access to their means of transportation, we ask the VA to explore collaborating with Disabled American Veterans (DAV) to see if DAV vans could again be utilized to help provide emergency transportation to affected veterans and their families.
2. **Housing Assistance:** Collaborating with state and local agencies to quickly identify and support affected HUD-VASH, Supportive Services for Veteran Families, and other Homeless Program Office programs' participants and to provide additional housing resources and emergency financial support for displaced veterans and their families. And please ensure that veterans who were already or are newly unhoused have easy access to outreach services to begin the process of becoming rehoused.
3. **Outreach and Benefits:** Ensuring that veterans in the affected areas are aware of available resources and have easy access to VA staff who can assist them in navigating the recovery process. We also urge the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) to continue to identify relief options for veterans affected by the fires. This could include the expedited processing of claims, suspending deadlines for response, or extending flexibility for disability medical examinations and other appointments.

4. **Mental Health Support:** Offering additional mental health resources, including counseling and crisis support, to help veterans cope with the emotional and psychological toll of the disaster.
5. **Long-Term Recovery Plans:** Coordinating with local, state, and federal agencies to provide long-term recovery assistance and rebuilding efforts, particularly for veterans whose homes and livelihoods were severely impacted.

Our offices stand ready to assist in any way possible to facilitate these efforts and ensure that our veterans receive the care and support they have earned. We would welcome the opportunity to help the VA coordinate its assistance to these needs in close partnership with state and local authorities and organizations to maximize the impact of recovery efforts for veterans.

We commend the VA for its timely, ongoing, and continued support to our veterans and their families following the devastating fires and look forward to working with you to ensure that our veterans have the resources they need to recover and rebuild their lives.

Sincerely,



Alex Padilla
United States Senator



Adam B. Schiff
United States Senator