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HEALTH
SOCIAL SECURITY

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0916

January 28, 2016

The Honorable Robert A. McDonald
Secretary
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Ave. NW
Washington, D.C. 20420

Dear Secretary McDonald:

I am contacting you regarding implementation of the Veterans Identification Card Act of 2015 (Public Law No. 114-31), legislation I introduced last year allowing all veterans in America to receive an official identification card from the VA. This bill was approved unanimously in both the U.S House of Representatives as well as the Senate, and was subsequently signed into law by President Obama on July 20, 2015.

Currently, millions of veterans are unable to prove their service to our country without physically carrying around their official military service records. These documents, referred to as DD-214 forms, contain veterans' sensitive personal information including Social Security numbers and service details that put them at needless risk for identity theft. According to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), veterans have twice the rate of identity theft than the general public nationwide.

This identification card will also serve as a convenient way for employers looking to hire veterans with a standardized way to verify an applicant's service in the military and more easily allow veterans to take advantage of goods, services, and promotional opportunities offered to those who selflessly served our nation in uniform.

Over the years, I have heard from countless veterans who have expressed frustration over their inability to easily document their service to our country. Our veterans deserve all of the respect and gratitude we can offer and these ID cards will help make their lives just a little bit easier.

I was disappointed to learn that the VA currently estimates that the identification card program will not be fully implemented until 2017, however. Another year is too long of a wait as millions of veterans remain vulnerable to identity theft. The VA needs to pick up the pace and move faster on issuing identification cards to any veteran who wants one. I ask that you expedite the implementation process and begin issuing the identification cards as soon as possible.

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To that end, I respectfully request that you provide the following information in writing to my office within ten days:

1. What specific steps have been taken to begin production and issuance of the ID cards to date?
2. What has the VA done to begin drafting regulations and establishing the infrastructure needed to produce these cards?
3. When is the VA ID card task force set to meet again with Congressional counterparts to discuss their progress?
4. What are the VA's next steps to successfully and expeditiously implement the law?

Thank you for your service to America's veterans as well as your commitment to building a more honest, transparent and accountable VA.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Vern Buchanan", is written over the printed name.

Vern Buchanan
Member of Congress