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# U.S. House of Representatives

## COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

ONE HUNDRED EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS

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WASHINGTON, DC 20515

<http://veterans.house.gov>

August 17, 2023

The Honorable Denis R. McDonough  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary McDonough:

The Digital G.I. Bill (DGIB) project is an ambitious effort to streamline processing of veterans' education benefits, institute automation, retire outmoded legacy systems, and add capabilities in a rapid, cost-effective fashion. Unfortunately, after a series of successful releases in 2022, the project's momentum has slowed and questions are mounting about the accuracy of the system's automation.

During the subcommittees' July 13, 2023, hearing entitled, "Reviewing the Digital G.I. Bill Program," Education Service Executive Director Joseph Garcia testified that the next major DGIB release will now occur sometime in summer 2024. This release was originally scheduled for mid-2023, and the change represents a delay of approximately one year. The delay will have cascading effects, making it virtually impossible to complete DGIB implementation when planned. We seek a clearer explanation of how the summer 2024 timeframe has been derived, how it may be accelerated, and what financial and operational impacts we should expect.

Additionally, we are concerned that the Education Service has not provided answers to questions from the Committee regarding the accuracy of DGIB automation. In response to written questions after the hearing, including how accurate the automation of supplemental and original claims is, the Education Service restated that there is a 99.1 percent accuracy requirement and described the process to review and report accuracy. However, the Education Service has not indicated whether the automation accuracy requirement has been met or what the actual levels of accuracy have been, including claims that are redirected to a regional processing office after automation errors. We are concerned about the impacts that incorrectly auto-processed, re-adjudicated claims are having on employees, processing timelines, and the staffing levels necessary to operate the Education Service. We expect the DGIB project to increase efficiency as promised, not disrupt it.

Please answer the following questions and provide any related documents no later than Friday, September 15, 2023. In producing documents, do not alter them in any way, including but not limited to the application of redactions or a watermark or disabling printing.

- 1) Please provide a copy of the DGIB integrated master schedule.
- 2) Provide a copy of any and all DGIB plans of action and milestones.
- 3) Pertaining to the next major DGIB release, please indicate activities along its critical path, their current completion statuses, and their expected durations. During the hearing, contractual negotiations and testing were discussed; please indicate any and all other activities along the critical path.
- 4) Provide the anticipated durations, scopes, and start and end dates, if known, for all subsequent releases.
- 5) Please provide a calendar indicating, for the remainder of 2023 and 2024, available dates when DGIB releases, software updates, or patches may reasonably occur without causing disruptions to educational institutions or VA users. During the hearing, Accenture Chief Innovation Officer Kyle Michl testified that there are approximately 14 available weeks out of 52 in any year.
- 6) What options are available to accelerate the next release, and what options is VA currently pursuing? Specifically, which critical path activities can be completed earlier than currently estimated, and what actions are necessary to accomplish this?
- 7) How will the next DGIB release and subsequent releases be tested, how long does each element of testing take, and is VA's testing environment currently able to perform or accommodate all such testing activities. If not, when will the testing environment be capable of doing so?
- 8) Please provide a list and explanation of each dependency of, or pertaining to, the next major DGIB release.
- 9) After accounting for the delay in the next major DGIB release and subsequent releases, what is the anticipated completion date for DGIB implementation? If no precise date can be identified, indicate the earliest and latest possible dates to complete implementation.
- 10) Please provide accuracy and error data for DGIB automation of original and supplemental claims, in raw numbers and percentages, for the past 12 months. Indicate how many claims were referred back to a regional processing office after automation, how many detailed issue forms were generated, and how many corrected letters were sent to veterans after initial letters contained inaccurate information, in each of the last 12 months.

- 11) Please provide root cause information, to the extent it is known, about automation errors. During the last monthly meeting between the Education Service and Committee staff, VA indicated that flawed data from the Defense Manpower Data Center is a significant root cause. Please indicate how many automation errors, in raw numbers and percentage terms, are attributed to this and other root causes.
- 12) Finally, as discussed during the hearing, please provide a copy of MITRE's updated DGIB life cycle cost estimate immediately upon completion. MITRE has indicated this will be in September.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue. We hope to see VA move past these difficulties in a transparent, fiscally responsible manner to complete the DGIB project. Veterans deserve a user-friendly G.I. Bill system that is worthy of their service.

Sincerely,



**DERRICK VAN ORDEN**  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity



**MATTHEW M. ROSENDALE, SR.**  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Technology Modernization



**MIKE LEVIN**  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity



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