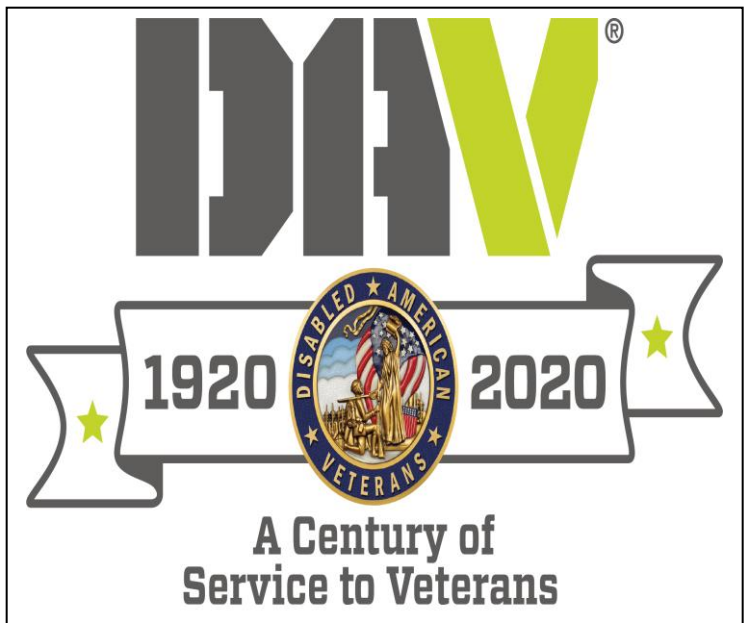




## Department of Florida August 2020 Newsletter



### Department Commander Thomas Ayala



I pray you and your family are healthy and safe. I had a great visit with Chapter 109 in Titusville. I have continued working at Department Headquarters as a DSO. Unfortunately, I attended two funerals this month as well.

This month I visited Titusville Chapter 109. On July 8, they held their elections and I had the honor of installing the new Chapter Officers. Chapter 109 has followed the State's and CDC rules for social distancing and wearing face masks. There were 32 members who attended the meeting. Congratulations to the newly elected Chapter Commander Tom Patton and the Chapter Line Officers.

The Department Line Officers will continue visiting Chapters. If you would like a Department Line Officer to attend a Chapter Event, please notify Andy Marshall ([andy@davfla.com](mailto:andy@davfla.com)) so he can assign an Officer to attend. I will try to visit every chapter I can possibly visit. I have a travel plan for each area of Florida so I will not miss any Chapter. Looking forward to visiting you. Remember, we are here to assist you in any way.

Our Department Local Veterans Assistance Program (LVAP) has decreased due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. We still have several Chapters who have continued their efforts to assist Veterans despite Covid-19. They have followed the State's and CDC rules for social distancing, wiping tables and chair after Bingo, and posted hand sanitizer on each table during Bingo. Several Chapter Service Officers are still doing Service work. Please continue to submit your Chapter LVAP hours. I understand some chapters do not meet during July and August but should still submit your hours. Also, please register on [VolunteerforVeterans.org](https://VolunteerforVeterans.org). This is another way you or anyone in your Chapter can help veterans in your area.

Unfortunately, I attended two funerals this month. The first funeral was for Petty Officer First Class Robert Bello Jr who was a Vietnam Veteran. PO1 Bello joined the Navy in 1969 and was stationed aboard the USS America in 1970. He volunteered his time at the Fleet Reserve Association Branch 290 in Jacksonville Beach and Jefferson Street VA Clinic Downtown Jacksonville.

The second funeral was for Lance Corporal Anne M. Pagano who was also a Vietnam Era Veteran. LCpl Pagano was stationed at Camp Lejeune, NC, where she was assigned to 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Logistics Group as a cook. She was discharged on July 1, 1975 and volunteered at the Lyons VA Medical Center in NJ. LCpl Pagano passed away due to complications from Covid-19.

Gov. Ron DeSantis signed several veteran-friendly bills from the 2020 Florida Legislative Session into law. Here is a summary of those changes:

**HB 171 – Postsecondary Education for Certain Military Personnel:** *The act requires the Board of Governors and State Board of Education to adopt a uniform set of rules to award academic credit for college degrees and technical training certification based on service members' and veterans' prior military training and experience. The newly enacted legislation helps veterans and members on active duty to achieve their degrees quicker and without having to take unnecessary course requirements.*

**Continued in Senior Vice Commander Godfrey's**





## Department Senior Vice Commander Duane Godfrey

### **HB 205 – Unlawful Use of Uniforms, Medals or Insignia –**

Effective Oct. 1, 2020, the act adds a provision to an existing law on stolen valor that misusing a military uniform or decorations for the purposes of obtaining employment or seeking election to a paid public office is now a violation of law.

### **HB 877 – Ad Valorem Tax Discount for Spouses of Certain Deceased Veterans Who Had Permanent, Combat-Related Disabilities.**

Proposes amending the State Constitution to authorize the surviving spouse of a deceased combat-related disabled veteran to carry over certain discounts on ad valorem taxes on homestead property until the surviving spouse remarries or sells or otherwise disposes of the property.

### **HB 879 – Surviving Spouse Ad Valorem Tax**

**Reduction.** The bill implements HB 877 by placing the legislation as a proposed Constitutional Amendment before Florida voters on the November 2020 ballot. If voted favorably, the amendment extends the homestead tax exemption of veterans 65 and older with combat-related disabilities who pass to the surviving spouse. At present, the exemption ends upon the death of the eligible veteran.

**HB 1249 – Transfer of Tax Exemption for Veterans:** The act adds a provision to an existing law requiring that veterans who were honorably discharged with a service-connected total and permanent disability or their surviving spouses who are entitled to receive ad valorem exemptions on property taxes for one property, may receive a pro-rated reimbursement of taxes paid on any property they buy between Jan. 1 and Nov. 1 of any year.

We are all in the midst of a very big pandemic and there is not a day that i don't hear Florida's name called as being one of the COVID- 19 leaders in the spread of this deadly virus, after saying that i will ask all of our brothers and sisters in the DAV and their families and friends to PLEASE WEAR A MASK WHEN YOU GO OUT IN PUBLIC and follow the guidelines of the CDC ,I will say a PRAYER for you all to be safe.

This month Lucy and I we to Alabama for 3 weeks to finish the construction of our get-away RV. We purchased a 1940's wringer washer to wash our cloths and I hung a 2-line close line and we built a deck and screen room on our RV. We also added a 8'x8' storage shed to the deck. We put a LP gas range and oven on the deck to make a summer kitchen and just before we came home to Florida. We had a driveway put in so I won't have to park in the mud.

This has been the best garden year we have ever had, We canned 108 pints of rattlesnake green bean and 34 quarts from 2 rows 40 foot long. We also canned and froze 60 pints of corn, 18 quarts of tomato juice, plus applesauce, apple and peach jelly. We also canned peaches, tomato jam and salsa. We are looking forward to the winter crops and have started preparing for the green peas, radishes, carrots and purple hull peas as well as potatoes.

Some of the DAV Chapters are reopening and having meetings again. If you want to have one of the line officers to visit your Chapter, please call 352 331 0945 to ask for one of our line officers to visit.







## Department Junior Vice Commander John Raber

A lot of things are happening that we all don't fully understand. Covid-19 has touched all of us in one way or another. Our State Commander has been affected probably more than most of us and my deepest condolences go out to him and his family. As Jr Vice I have visited several Chapters and Units, I want to recognize them know Chapter 97 in Sarasota Florida. Chapter 101 in Nokomis and Chapter 4 in Tampa. I also escorted the Auxiliary State Commander to 127 in Lake City.

As a Department Service Officer, I have found it very challenging at the least to help veterans. The most effective way for me has been telephonic. I have been filling out all the forms mailing them to the individual having the client call me when he receives them and finally having the client send them to the NSOs in the self-addressed envelope I enclosed in the mail I sent. This gives them time also to collect the evidence for their claim from outside Doctors or letters from Doctors and veterans who served with them. We are also doing appointments by the office, taking the proper precautions so as to protect the service officers in our Chapter.

I spoke with the Health Department and the CDC when a member of our Chapter tested Positive for COVID-19 and was surprised by their answers to my questions so I thought I might pass them along. If a person is exposed to someone with COVID-19, they should be tested in 5 days. If the test comes back negative, they need not quarantine for 14 days. If someone is positive, then a test will be given in 14 days to see if the can come out of Quarantine.

Just because you were exposed doesn't mean your infected. Please always wear a mask in public and wash your hands frequently as the virus apparently enters though nose, eyes and mouth.

I am happy to say that our Chapter voted to purchase a temperature reader for our entrance door. The machine will automatically read the temperature of everyone entering and will set off an alarm when someone's temperature registers above normal. The use of a temperature device works well along with Social Distancing.

Any Chapter wanting me to attend their meeting or come for a visit please call me at 941-243-9182 I would be happy to attend. Also remember to turn in your Officers reports. Thank you and be safe and enjoy the summer.

Although the DAV has cancelled our National Convention scheduled for this month, there are still ways to participate. Check the DAV website at [www.dav.org](http://www.dav.org) for information regarding virtual seminars and other Convention activities. As you may have heard, all National Officers and National Executive Committeepersons will remain in place until next year's National Convention in Reno, NV. In addition, the DAV website will have information on DAV's Centennial Celebration scheduled for September in Cincinnati, Ohio. Monitor the website to obtain the latest information on these two events.

[WWW.DAV.ORG](http://WWW.DAV.ORG)





## Department Chaplain Chip Hanson

Throughout our history we have had several pandemics, we survived them all. According to MPHON LINE, these are all the pandemics in the last 100 years.

### FLU PANDEMIC (1918)

Death Toll: 20 -50 million

Cause: Influenza

Between 1918 and 1920 a disturbingly deadly outbreak of influenza tore across the globe, infecting over a third of the world's population and ending the lives of 20 – 50 million people. Of the 500 million people infected in the 1918 pandemic, the mortality rate was estimated at 10% to 20%, with up to 25 million deaths in the first 25 weeks alone. What separated the 1918 flu pandemic from other influenza outbreaks was the victims; where influenza had always previously only killed juveniles and the elderly or already weakened patients, it had begun striking down hardy and completely healthy young adults, while leaving children and those with weaker immune systems still alive.

### ASIAN FLU (1956-1958)

Death Toll: 2 million

Cause: Influenza

Asian Flu was a pandemic outbreak of Influenza A of the H2N2 subtype, that originated in China in 1956 and lasted until 1958. In its two-year spree, Asian Flu traveled from the Chinese province of Guizhou to Singapore, Hong Kong, and the United States.

Estimates for the death toll of the Asian Flu vary depending on the source, but the World Health Organization places the final tally at approximately 2 million deaths, 69,800 of those in the US alone.

### FLU PANDEMIC (1968)

Death Toll: 1 million

Cause: Influenza

A category 2 Flu pandemic sometimes referred to as “the Hong Kong Flu,” the 1968 flu pandemic was caused by the H3N2 strain of the Influenza A virus, a genetic offshoot of the H2N2 subtype. From the first reported case on July 13, 1968 in Hong Kong, it took only 17 days before outbreaks of the virus were reported in Singapore and Vietnam, and within three months had spread to The Philippines, India, Australia, Europe, and the United States. While the 1968 pandemic had a comparatively low mortality rate (.5%) it still resulted in the deaths of more than a million people, including 500,000 residents of Hong Kong, approximately 15% of its population at the time.

### WHAT ABOUT COVID-19 (THE NOVEL CORONAVIRUS)?

Beginning in December 2019, in the region of Wuhan, China, a new (“novel”) coronavirus began appearing in human beings. It has been named Covid-19, a shortened form of “coronavirus disease of 2019.” This new virus spreads incredibly quickly between people, due to its newness – no one on earth has an immunity to Covid-19, because no one had Covid-19 until 2019. While it was initially seen to be an epidemic in China, the virus spread worldwide within months. The WHO declared Covid-19 a pandemic in March, and by the end of that month, the world saw more than a half-million people infected and nearly 30,000 deaths. The infection rate in the US and other nations was still spiking.

“I don’t know whether this is the best of times or the worst of times, but I assure you it’s the only time you’ve got.” Art Buchwald





## John Markiewicz Department Judge Advocate

One would think, after all that has been written and published on the subject, that the Chapter Commanders would understand that they, and the Executive Committee, only approve, appoint or take action subject to the membership approval/confirmation. I recently heard about a Commander who insisted that he appoints all committees and officers when vacancies occur and that he does not need the approval nor confirmation by anybody. He, like many Chapter Commanders, has obviously never bothered to familiarize himself with the Bylaws of his own Chapter, let alone those of the Department or National Organization.

When a position is vacated due to the resignation, death or removal by the membership, the Commander is empowered to appoint a Chapter member to serve the unexpired term, **subject to the approval of the Chapter** except when the succession of Officers is detailed in the Constitution & Bylaws (Line Officers, Commander, Sr Vice Commander and Jr Vice Commander vacancies are filled by moving up in order of succession until the vacancy is at the lowest level of Jr Vice Commander, which may then be appointed by the Commander **subject to the approval of the Chapter**).

The Commander, **with the approval of the Chapter**, shall appoint the Adjutant and Chapter Committees, except for the Nominating Committee, which shall be elected by the Chapter.

Such other officers as may be necessary to operate the Chapter may be appointed by the Commander, **with the approval of the Chapter**.

In summary, virtually everything the Commander or Executive Committee does, is done only **with the approval of the Chapter**. Do you all notice the commonality of the above statements?

The commander shall preside at all regular or special meetings of the chapter. He/she shall maintain order and dispatch such business as may legally come before him/her. All checks or vouchers issued by the chapter treasurer may be countersigned by the commander. He/ she shall perform all other duties that may reasonably be assumed to be incidental to the office, including those set forth in the chapter's Constitution and Bylaws and in the Official DAV Ritual and such other duties as may be lawfully delegated to him/her by the chapter.

At each meeting the commander should have available:

- A copy of the chapter, department and national Constitution Bylaws & Regulations,
- A copy of Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised (available at local bookstores or the library),
- A list or agenda of the complete order of business and
- A list of all committees.

The commander also serves as the official spokesperson for the chapter in the community and may not serve as chapter adjutant or treasurer.

The commander has a fiscal responsibility to:

1. Ensure the safeguarding of funds, properties and other assets against unauthorized use or loss.
2. Ensure all disbursements of funds are properly approved in accordance with the chapter Bylaws.
3. Comply with standards established by the National Executive Committee for audits of chapter establishments, organizations, programs, activities and functions. These standards require chapters to be responsible for providing adequate audit coverage of their programs as 2 an aid in determining whether funds have been applied efficiently, economically, effectively and consistently with program objectives and underlying agreements.





## Andy Marshall Department Adjutant

### WASHINGTON

The Department of Veterans affairs and the Department of Defense have taken action to minimize the number of non-Essential required visits to identification card offices during The coronavirus public health emergency. If you have a VA Or DOD card that has expired or is about to expire, here are Your options.

#### VA issued Veterans Health Identification Cards:

During the COVID-19 pandemic, veterans enrolled in VA health care who are seeking a brand-new card (initial) should contact their local VA medical facility for guidance to request a card. Once issued, cards are valid for ten years.

Most veterans will be able to request a replacement card by Contacting their local VA medical facility and making their request via phone, or they can call (877) 222 8387 Monday through Friday 8:00 am to 8:00 pm ET. Once their identity has been verified, a replacement card will be mailed to them.

#### DOD Issued ID Cards

Detailed information concerning DoD ID Card operations During the pandemic can be found at the DoD Response to COVID-19-DoD ID Cards and Benefits webpage: <https://www.CAC.mil/coronavirus>.

For all information regarding DoD-issued ID Cards, please Contact the defense Manpower Data Center Identity and ID Card Policy Team at: [dhacacpolicy@mail.mil](mailto:dhacacpolicy@mail.mil).

#### DoD-issued Uniformed Services ID Cards (USID) including Reservists, military retirees, 100% disabled veterans and Authorized dependent ID Cards

Expiration dates on Uniformed Services ID Cards will be Automatically extended to September 30, 2020, within DEERS for cardholders whose affiliation with DOD has not Changed but whose USID card has expired after January 1, 2020.

Sponsors of USID card holders may make family member enrollment and eligibility updates remotely.

Initial issuance for first time USID card-eligible individuals may be done remotely with an expiration date of one year from date of issue. The minimum age for first-time issuance for eligible family members has been temporarily increased from 10 to 14 years of age.

#### Did you Know

Army Emergency Relief's singular mission is to provide financial assistance for active duty, Retired Soldiers, surviving spouses, Reserve Component Solders and family members when they need it most. The most common assistance requests are for basic living expenses such as personal vehicle repair, rent, mortgage and utilities. Additionally, AER adjusts eligibility and assistance levels to help the entire Army team when they are impacted financially by natural disasters such as hurricanes, floods and fires.

If you are facing financial challenges as described above contact AER at <https://www.armyemergencyrelief.org/assistance/>.

The purpose of the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society is to provide emergency financial assistance to active duty and retired Navy and Marine Corps personnel and their families. NMCRS provides assistance with basic living expenses such as food, rent, utilities, assistance with emergency transportation, funerals, medical and dental bills, essential car repair, pay problems, and other emergency needs. Assistance is provided with loans or grants, depending on financial need.

The following personnel are eligible for financial and other assistance provided by the Society:

- Active-duty and retired members of the regular [Navy](#) and [Marine Corps](#) Reservists on extended active duty and certain retired reservists
- Dependents and dependent survivors of the above members Indigent mothers (65 years or older) of deceased service members who have limited resources and no family to provide for their welfare



## Adjutant's Column Continued

- Ex-spouses "[20-20-20](#)" (un-remarried former spouses) whose marriage to a service member lasted for at least 20 years while the service member was on active duty.
  - Uniformed members of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).
  - Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society
- 801 N. Randolph St., Suite 1228 Arlington, VA 22203-1978 Phone: 800-654-8364  
<https://www.nmcrs.org>

**The Air Force Assistance Fund** is an annual effort to raise funds for the charities that provide support to our Air Force family in need (active duty, retirees, reservists, guard and our dependents, including surviving spouses).

The four charitable organizations provide support in an emergency, with educational needs, or a secure retirement home for widows or widowers of our Air Force members in need of financial assistance.

The Air Force Aid Society, the LeMay Foundation, Air Force Villages Charitable Foundation and Air Force Enlisted Village can ensure that when a fellow Airman needs help, they have a place to go.

Coast Guard Mutual Assistance serves the entire Coast Guard community:

- **Active Duty Members**
- **Auxiliary Members**
- **Civilian Employees**
- **Immediate Family Members**
- **PHS Officers and Chaplains**
- **Reserve Members**
- **Retired Military Personnel**
- **Surviving Family Members**

### Claims Assistance Still Available

NSOs are available 9am to 4pm EST Monday-Friday @ 1-888-604-0234. If you need to file a claim over the phone or check on status of claims, call this number.

A reminder that Chapter Financial Reports are due NLT October 1, 2020 for the year July 1, 2019-to the period ending June 30, 2020. Unless your Chapter's income excluding membership per capita dues is above \$25, 000, a copy of the Chapter Financial Report is to be sent to National Headquarters in accordance with the National Bylaw change which took effect this year. *See National Constitution and By-laws Article 9 sec. 9.3.*

Also, the financial statements as required by these Bylaws must be reviewed by a certified public accountant if the gross annual income, excluding membership per capita exceeds \$300, 000 from all sources. *See Article 9, Sec. 9.1, para. 2.*

**Chapters visited by Department Line Officers & Adjutant Since Department Convention June 2020**

**4, 6, 18, 30, 90, 97, 101, 158**



## Calendar of Events

August 4 Coast Guard Birthday



August 7 Purple Heart Day



August 19 National Aviation Day



August National Golf Month



## Adjutant's Column Continued

**Report from VA's Office of Inspector General****REPORT #19-07059-169 July 22, 2020****The Systematic Technical Accuracy Review Program Has Not Adequately Identified and Corrected Claims-Processing Deficiencies**

Veterans rely on VA to make timely, accurate, and consistent decisions on disability compensation claims to ensure they receive the benefits to which they are entitled. The Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) has a Compensation Service that provides oversight of the delivery of disability compensation benefits to veterans.

The Systematic Technical Accuracy Review (STAR) program is one part of the Compensation Service's multifaceted quality assurance program to ensure disability compensation benefits are provided in a timely and accurate manner. The STAR program is intended to provide quality review and analyses of all elements of processing a specific claim. STAR quality reviews are performed on individual, randomly selected claims from across the country.

STAR analysts perform quality reviews on randomly selected individual disability compensation claims to identify claims-processing deficiencies and provide feedback to improve decision-making. VBA uses the results of these reviews, which are reported to the public, to estimate claims-processing accuracy for each of its regional offices and the entire nation. If STAR team members fail to identify all deficiencies during a claim review or fail to provide appropriate feedback, VBA may not be able to effectively monitor services to veterans or improve the decision-making process and the quality of decisions.

This review is one in a series of five VA OIG reports regarding VBA's quality assurance program.

**What the Review Found**

VBA did not take sufficient actions to make certain the STAR program fully achieved its stated mission of identifying deficiencies in the claims process and providing meaningful feedback to regional office employees. Consequently, VBA did not have the quality data needed to drive operational decisions and improve decisions provided to veterans and their beneficiaries.

**What the Review Found**

VBA did not take sufficient actions to make certain the STAR program fully achieved its stated mission of identifying deficiencies in the claims process and providing meaningful feedback to regional office employees. Consequently, VBA did not have the quality data needed to drive operational decisions and improve decisions provided to veterans and their beneficiaries.

The OIG team examined a statistical sample of 100 claims from which it estimated that about 55 percent of claims had deficiencies, including

Benefit-entitlement errors that could affect veterans' disability compensation <sup>1</sup> payments, and

Procedural deficiencies such as having to report for an unnecessary examination.

Other STAR issues included

Problems with the process for correcting errors that resulted in untimely and inaccurate actions, and

Feedback from reviews that did not enhance the quality of disability compensation claims decisions.

The OIG team found that the quality review process needs improvement. Under the STAR program, if a STAR analyst identifies errors, then that claim is examined by a senior reviewer. The OIG team estimated that benefit-entitlement and procedural deficiencies existed in 34 percent of claims reviewed by both a STAR analyst and a senior reviewer. The OIG team also found that STAR analysts were generally identifying benefit-entitlement errors and not placing as much emphasis on finding procedural deficiencies.

The OIG team determined there was no formal process for reviewing procedural deficiencies. In addition, only claims with identified benefit-entitlement errors were subjected to a second review for validation by a senior reviewer. Moreover, senior reviewers who conducted second reviews also missed deficiencies as no comprehensive file review was done and they only focused on the deficiencies identified by the STAR analysts.

*\*1*

*A benefit-entitlement error occurs when a claims processor takes an action that violates current regulations or other directives and affects the outcome or has the potential to affect the outcome of a veteran's claim, such as an overpayment or underpayment*

## Adjutant's Column Continued

The OIG team also estimated VBA did not ensure that about 82 percent of claims requiring corrective actions based on STAR reviews were corrected accurately or in a timely manner. VBA's Office of Field Operations has control over the corrections process. However, the OIG team determined that VBA did not establish adequate policies, procedures, or monitoring to ensure corrections were completed in a timely and accurate manner. Thus, there was minimal bridging between the Office of Field Operations staff, STAR staff, and the regional offices to monitor, enforce, or otherwise ensure that accurate corrections were made in a timely manner.

Finally, the OIG team determined that the STAR program was not fulfilling its mission to provide meaningful feedback to all regional office staff to improve decisions provided to veterans and their beneficiaries. From the perspective of regional offices, STAR feedback was outdated and not readily accessible, and therefore not used to make operational changes. STAR reviews reached claims processors long after they had missed—and likely continued to miss—deficiencies, and the program's feedback was not helpful to regional office staff because it required extensive time to analyze and was housed in an electronic system that staff were still learning to navigate.

The deficiencies in the STAR program, combined with inadequate internal controls, make it more likely that VBA lacks the quality data needed to drive operational decisions. These shortcomings also undermine VBA's ability to ensure timely and accurate disability claim decisions for veterans.

### What the OIG Recommended

The OIG recommended that the Undersecretary for benefits implement a plan to ensure STAR analysts focus on and assess all procedural deficiency elements included on the quality review checklist. The OIG recommended a formal second-review process when STAR analysts do not identify claims-processing deficiencies. In addition, the OIG recommended improving the current second-review process when STAR analysts identify claims-processing deficiencies and consider requiring senior reviewers to conduct a comprehensive examination of all issues assessed by the analyst.

The OIG also recommended that the undersecretary assess the current training requirements for STAR staff to increase the accuracy of reviews, and establish adequate policies, procedures, and monitoring to ensure corrections are completed timely and accurately. The OIG further recommended the undersecretary develop a plan to provide quality review data and meaningful feedback to assist regional offices in improving the quality of decision-making.

### Recommendations 1–6

The OIG made the following recommendations to the Undersecretary for benefits:

1. Improve the current second-review process for quality reviews when STAR analysts identify claims-processing deficiencies and consider requiring senior reviewers to conduct a comprehensive review of all issues assessed by the analyst.
2. Establish a formal second-review process for quality reviews when STAR analysts do not identify claims-processing deficiencies.
3. Assess the current training requirements for STAR staff and establish a formal training plan that promotes claims-processing expertise and accuracy.
4. Implement a plan to ensure STAR analysts place more emphasis on and assess all procedural deficiency elements included on the quality review checklist.
5. Establish adequate policies, procedures, and monitoring to ensure corrections are completed timely and accurately.
6. Ensure STAR develops a plan to provide usable data and meaningful feedback to assist regional offices in improving the quality of decision-making.

### Management Comments

The Undersecretary for benefits concurred with recommendations 1, 2, 3, and 5, and provided acceptable action plans.

The Undersecretary concurred in part with recommendations 4 and 6. For recommendation 4, VBA agreed that some procedural errors have the potential to affect benefits. The Undersecretary provided an acceptable action plan whereby VBA's quality assurance staff will modify the STAR quality review checklist to emphasize critical errors and categorize procedural deficiencies. For recommendation 6, VBA noted that STAR enables regional offices to see error trend analyses so they may address them at the local level. Moreover, the analyses increase stakeholder awareness of claims-processing quality at the national level. The Undersecretary provided an acceptable action plan to present STAR data in a format that is more usable and aligned with other types of reports currently used by regional offices.

The OIG will monitor VBA's progress and follow up on the implementation of all recommendations until all proposed actions are completed.