

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 11, 2008

Mr. Walter G. Blackwell, CEO
National Veterans Business Development Corporation
1625 K Street, NW
Suite 750
Washington, DC 20006

Dear Mr. Blackwell:

We are thoroughly concerned that the National Veterans Business Development Corporation ("TVC" or "the Veterans Corporation") has not yet made a decision on its grant program for FY 2008. As a result, the veteran centers that the TVC created are now reducing services, laying off staff and are on the verge of closing. Therefore, we strongly urge TVC to render a decision as soon as possible and expeditiously communicate that decision to the veteran centers.

We have been told that the veteran centers submitted their applications for the grants by the end of September. As for TVC, it is our understanding that, despite operating from the continuing resolution funds received from October through January and now the full \$1.4 million FY 2008 appropriation from Congress, TVC has not distributed funding to the centers other than one \$8,000 disbursement. Therefore, the centers have been operating without TVC support for four months, or one-third of a year, even while TVC was receiving federal funds.

Due to this lack of funding, we have been told that centers have been relying on previously allocated funds that should be used for helping our Nation's veterans and, as a result, that centers are struggling to remain operational. One center has already laid off staff, and the other two are planning to do so within days. The centers have also been forced to reduce services.

We are deeply concerned of the impact that this slow decision making by TVC and an apparent inability of the TVC to function in an appropriate and efficient manner will have on the well-being of the regional centers.

Veterans have made a great sacrifice to defend our country, and they have earned the support of their government in reentering civilian life. Providing counseling and technical assistance is a crucial component of achieving that goal. By allowing these centers to close, we will be taking a step in the wrong direction.

Additionally, in a letter on December 21, 2007, the Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee requested from the Veterans Corporation two vital categories of information, which they have still yet to receive -- well past the deadline. A request was made for various documents detailing how the Veterans Corporation has used its funding over the

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past three years, as well as a request for information regarding when the Veterans Corporation will make decisions on its grant program, and who will receive what amount of funding. The fact that the information has yet to be provided in nearly two months is completely unacceptable.

Please *inform us*, in writing, when TVC will make a decision on the grants and *when the funds will be distributed*, in addition to providing us with the other requested documents. We look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,




John F. Kerry
US Senator



Olympia J. Snowe
US Senator



Barbara A. Mikulski
US Senator



Richard Shelby
US Senator

CC: Board of the Veterans Corporation