

J. LUIS CORREA

46TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

WASHINGTON OFFICE

1039 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515
(202) 225-2965

SANTA ANA DISTRICT OFFICE

2323 N. BROADWAY, SUITE 319
SANTA ANA, CA 92706
(714) 559-6190



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

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

SUBCOMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION
AND CITIZENSHIP

SUBCOMMITTEE ON COURTS,
INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY AND THE INTERNET
VICE CHAIR

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

SUBCOMMITTEE ON BORDER SECURITY,
FACILITATION, AND OPERATIONS

SUBCOMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
AND MARITIME SECURITY
CHAIR

September 2, 2020

Honorable Michelle Steel
Chair, Second District
County of Orange
333 W. Santa Ana Blvd.
Santa Ana, CA 92702

Dear Chairwoman Steele

I write concerning the continuing issues that our veterans are experiencing with the OC Veteran Service Office (OCVSO), including long wait times for appointments. Last year, I authored a letter regarding these same issues, which unfortunately have not been addressed. In the county's response to my letter, it stated that it does not receive any federal funding as an explanation to the problem. However, no county across the country receives federal funding. Instead, it is a combination of state and local funds. Therefore, I once again write about the long-wait times for our veterans.

Orange County has a four-month wait time for our veterans before receiving services. A year ago, the wait time for the OCVSO was three months, which indicates that the county is going in the wrong direction on this matter. Currently, the county has open Veterans Claim Representative (VCR) positions—out of a total of seven in the office, only three are filled at this time. Additionally, the county has a lower number of VCR's to veterans as compared to neighboring counties. Orange County, if VCR positions are fully staffed, has a ratio of 1 to 18,000 compared to Los Angeles with a 1 to 12,727, Riverside 1 to 11,545, and San Bernardino of 1 to 5,764. Orange County would need to raise the number of VCRs to 12 to have a ratio of 1 to 10,000. It is critical to understand why the office has vacancies and why the overall staffing is low to serve our veterans.

Overall, the county does not prioritize our veterans. In comparison to other counties, the surrounding C-VSOs have a Director position who has direct access and regularly provides reports to their Board of Supervisors. The OCVSO only has a manager position that is under layers of bureaucracy, which impedes their ability to directly convey any issues or challenges they the office experience to the OC Board of Supervisors.

All veterans gave some, and some gave all. In my office, I have a "Wall of Heroes." They are the men and women of my district who made the ultimate sacrifice for our nation, post 9/11. The veterans who returned put their life on the line. We owe them. Orange County should be an example of how to treat and serve our veterans. They deserve the best.

I urge you to take action on this matter so we can all be proud of the county's commitment to our veterans. I will do my part to urge our state legislators to provide more funding for our veterans. At the federal level, I will work to provide the county funding as well. My office stands ready to work with you and any other interested party to find a sensible solution to this problem.

Respectfully,



Lou Correa
Member of Congress

CC:

Vice-Chair Andrew Do, District 1
Supervisor Lisa Bartlett, District 5
Supervisor Donald P. Wagner, District 3
Supervisor Doug Chaffee, District 4
County Executive Officer Frank Kim