

Rep. Peter Welch called on Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric Shinseki Thursday morning to reconsider the outsourcing of pension claims and inquiry call functions from the White River Junction VA Benefits Office.

Recently, the VA has moved to centralize Veterans Benefits Administration functions to out-of-state call centers and processing centers. Rather than receiving timely and personalized service from the White River Junction office, Vermont veterans have found their inquiries and certain claims rerouted to impersonal, centralized facilities.

Welch spoke with Sec. Shinseki about the issue at a meeting of the House Military Veterans Caucus, of which Welch is a member.

"Vermont veterans expect and deserve quality, personal and timely service from the Department of Veterans Affairs. That service can best be delivered locally at facilities like the White River Junction VA Benefits Office, not at large, out-of-state call centers and processing centers," Welch said. "I hope Sec. Shinseki will consider my request seriously so that Vermont veterans can be assured of high-quality service."

According to Roger Bourgerly, Adjutant and National Service Officer for the Disabled American Veterans Department of Vermont, veterans throughout the state have been affected by the change.

Bourgerly said, "As a veteran myself and a National Service Officer who helps other veterans with benefit claims, I have seen first-hand how the farming-out of certain work from the VA office in White River Junction means lower quality and slower service for Vermont veterans. I hope that Sec. Shinseki hears and responds to this concern."