



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
CLERMONT COUNTY, OHIO

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Time to Wake the Sleeping Giant, *Calling All Veterans!*

Batavia, Ohio. The Director of the Clermont County Veterans' Service Office labels the backlog of Veterans Administration (VA) claims as outrageous and unacceptable. "Right now if a veteran walks into our office to file a claim, it could take up to nine months to get a preliminary response," said Dan Bare. "For some odd reason most initial claims are denied, so the veteran or his family must file an appeal. It's not unusual for this process to drag out 3 to 5 years!" Bare says the VA currently has a backlog of 1.3 million claims; he says the situation has steadily been getting worse since 1946. "For many of our World War II vets, waiting up to 5 years for a response is like waiting a lifetime," he said. "We are losing these brave men and women at the rate of over 1,000 a day."



Bare bristles when he notes that the VA has an antiquated system of record keeping. "These veterans' claims are not computerized. They are on paper and kept in file boxes and cabinets; this is simply unacceptable and quite unsettling," he said. Flanked by 86-year-old Pearl Harbor survivor Joe Whitt, 14-year-old Brandon Anstaett, and 5-year-old Carson Kellerman, Bare said that the claims backlog has been a problem since Whitt got out of the service and at the rate we are going will be beyond horrendous by the time the young boys with him would get out of the service, should they decide to serve.

"We need to wake up the sleeping giant to put pressure on our governor, state lawmakers, all the way up to the White House to give veterans what they deserve and what they were promised," he said. Bare estimates there are 16,000 veterans in Clermont County, but less than 5 percent are active in veterans' organizations. "Nationally, we've got something like 24 million veterans plus their families with only a tiny fraction involved in organizations like the American Legion or Veterans of Foreign Wars. It's hard to imagine the significant majority, or about 20 million, veterans are so complacent. Washington politicians know this, and will only respond if the majority of veterans stand up and become active. There is power in numbers and I am calling on all of our veterans to unite behind this matter and stop the practice of putting veterans' benefits and rights on the back burner. It is disgraceful." For more information on the campaign to stop the backlog of VA claims, contact the Clermont County Veterans' Services Office at (513) 732-7363.

Pictured above: Pearl Harbor survivor Joe Whitt, 5-year-old Carson Kellerman, 14-year-old Brandon Anstaett, and Clermont County Veterans' Services Director Dan Bare.

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For additional information about this or other county news, contact Clermont County Communications Director Kathryn Lehr at (513) 732-7597 or by e-mail, klehr@co.clermont.oh.us.