

APPENDIX A
COMMUNICATIONS TO RESPONDENTS

INITIAL CONTACT LETTER TO VETERANS
(COMMISSION LOGO)

Name
Address 1
Address 2

Dear {Name Of The Respondent}:

This letter is to request your participation in a study being conducted by the Veterans' Disability Benefits Commission which was created by Public Law 108-136, the National Defense Authorization Act of 2004. Its members were appointed by the President and the leaders of the Congress. The Commission is charged with assessing the benefits that are provided to veterans and their survivors for disabilities and deaths due to military service. The purpose of the study is to give advice to Congress and the President about veterans' disability benefits and services. If you would like to know more about the Commission, I urge you to check our website at: www.vetscommission.org

A major part of our study is a survey of a nationally representative sample of veterans about how your disabilities impact your life. You were randomly selected to participate. We hired a respected research organization, ORC Macro, to interview you by phone. **All of the answers you give will be kept *strictly confidential* and will be used for research purposes only.** The interview will take about 30 minutes.

I share your concerns about the recent theft of VA records—including mine—from the home of a VA employee. I personally assure you that the Commission is independent of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and we are taking every precaution to make sure that your personal information is not at risk in this study. Please refer to the attached Frequently Asked Questions to find out what we are doing to keep your information safe.

Please return the enclosed card to let ORC Macro know the best phone number to reach you and the most convenient time to call. Your participation is voluntary, and you can withdraw your participation at any time. However, we hope that you will take the time to participate in this very important project in order to help us gain a better understanding about how well your needs, and the needs of other disabled veterans are being met.

Your answers, along with those of other veterans who make up the national sample, will tell us about how disabilities affect the quality of veterans' lives. We will use the survey results to make recommendations to Congress about the benefits for disabled veterans and their survivors. **Your answers will not affect any VA benefits that you receive.** On behalf of my fellow Commissioners, I thank you for your assistance on this very important project.

Sincerely,

James Terry Scott,
Lieutenant General, US Army, Retired
Chairman

Veterans QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

What is the Veterans Disability Benefits Commission?

The Veterans' Disability Benefits Commission is an independent, bipartisan body created by Public Law 108-136 and appointed by the President and leaders of Congress. The Commission is charged with studying the benefits and services intended to compensate and assist veterans and their survivors for disabilities and deaths attributable to military service. The Commission is independent of the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs. You can get more information about the Commission and its members by visiting the Commission's website, www.vetscommission.org

What is the CNA Corporation (CNAC)?

The CNA Corporation (CNAC) is a non-profit, independent organization that operates a federally funded research and development center (the Center for Naval Analysis), which specializes in military issues. The Commission hired CNAC to coordinate its study of benefits for disabled veterans and survivors, and to analyze data from a wide range of sources, including this survey. You can get more information about CNAC at their website, www.cnac.org

What is ORC Macro?

ORC Macro is an independent research company that conducts surveys for government and the private sector. ORC Macro operates several computer-assisted telephone interviewing facilities throughout the United States and has a trained staff for conducting telephone surveys. You can get more information about ORC Macro by visiting their website, www.orcmacro.com

Who are you surveying?

We are surveying a representative sample of veterans with service-connected disabilities who receive disability benefits from VA.

Why should I participate?

You have been selected to participate in the survey as a part of a nationally representative sample of veterans who receive disability benefits. Your participation is voluntary, but very important because your answers will represent your circumstances and experiences, as well as those of other veterans who are in the same situation.

Why should I answer the questions?

You should voluntarily answer the questions so that your views are heard and counted. This is your chance to tell the Commission and Congress about how your service-connected disabilities affect your life. You will not benefit directly from completing the survey. There are no foreseeable risks to you if you participate in the survey, but you may feel uncomfortable with some of the questions.

What kinds of questions will you ask?

The survey asks questions about your health status, life satisfaction, health care, and employment.

When will an interviewer call?

ORC Macro interviewers will begin calling a few weeks after you get this letter. They will keep calling for several weeks until they reach you. They will also call in the evening and weekends if they cannot reach you during the week.

How will I know the person calling is really the ORC Macro interviewer?

The interviewer will give you his or her first and last name, and say that they are calling from ORC Macro about the letter from General Scott.

Can a family member assist if I have difficulty hearing or speaking?

If you need a family member to assist you with the interview, or to arrange for a more convenient time, let the ORC Macro interviewer know. They will set up an appointment for the interview that is convenient for you and the family member who assists you.

Am I required to answer the survey questions to keep my disability benefits?

No. Your VA benefits are authorized by law. Your VA benefits *cannot* be reduced or stopped if you refuse to answer any or all of the survey questions.

What assurance do I have that CNAC, ORC Macro and the Commission will keep everything confidential?

In addition to the professional responsibility that CNAC and ORC Macro researchers have to keep answers confidential, they are also bound to do so by law. All individuals who are involved in this survey signed a legal agreement promising to keep your information strictly confidential. The information you supply will be confidential and protected by law (the Privacy Act of 1974, 5 U.S.C. 522a and *section 5701 of Title 38 of the United States Code*). Disclosure of information involves releasing of statistical data and other non-identifying data for addressing issues about disability benefits for veterans and their survivors and making recommendations to Congress about veterans and survivor benefits. The data and results reported by the researchers to the Commission will all be in aggregate statistical form, with no individual identifying information whatsoever.

What is the Commission doing to make sure my information is kept safe?

The Commission is taking a number of precautions with your data. As explained above, everyone who works on this project is legally responsible for keeping your data safe. Your computerized information is kept in buildings with a guard at the door. Your personal information is kept on computers that are in locked rooms. The computers are programmed so that only authorized staff who have to use the data can actually use it; no one else will have access to the files. Your information will not go home with anyone.

Because of these precautions, the interviewers who call you will only know your name, but not your address or other information about you. A computer will dial your phone number unless we have difficulty getting the right number to reach you. We are doing everything possible to make sure you are protected.

What will you do with my answers?

Once ORC Macro completes the surveys, they will be turned over to CNAC for analysis. CNAC will link your survey answers with data VA already has in its administrative files, like your disability rating, how long you have gotten benefits, whether you are male or female, etc. We are getting this information from VA so that we do not take up your time asking for information that is already available. Once CNAC links the surveys and other information, they will analyze all of the data and report the findings to the Commission.

What will be done as a result of the survey?

The Commission will use the survey results in developing their report and recommendations to Congress about benefits for service-disabled veterans and survivors of veterans.

Where can I get a copy of the Commission's Report to Congress?

The report will be available after June of 2007 on the Commission's website, www.vetscommission.org

Who do I call if I have any questions about the survey?

If you have questions about the survey or respondent rights, you can call toll-free, 1-800-xxx-xxxx Monday through Friday from 9:00 AM until 5:00 PM Eastern Time.

Who do I call when I am ready to do the survey?

You can call ORC Macro toll-free at 1-800-xxx-xxxx to complete the survey. They will be there Monday through Friday from 9:00 AM until 5:00 PM Eastern Time. Remember, you will need the **blue card** when you call to do the survey.

Who do I call if I have questions about my VA benefits?

If you have questions about your VA benefits, you can call VA toll free at 1-800-827-1000 or visit their website, www.va.gov

Who do I call if I have a problem with the survey?

If you feel that the survey had a harmful effect on you, you should call Rena Agee at ORC Macro's Institutional Review Board at 1-301-572-0200.

[Enter name], choose how you'd like to complete our survey . . .

Call us toll free at **1-800-000-0000** to schedule or complete the interview. ***You will need this card when you call.***

If you prefer that we call you, we need your phone number and the times when it is most convenient to talk with you. Please write your telephone number, including the area code:

Area Code: ___ ___ ___ Number ___ ___ ___ - ___ ___ ___

When is it most convenient for us to call? Check the day(s) and time(s) when you would like us to call.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	
Sunday							
Morning	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Afternoon	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Evening	•	•	•	•	•	•	•

If you have any questions, call our toll-free number. We are happy to answer your questions.

Return this card in the pre-addressed, postage-paid envelope or use it to call us.

Thanks for your help!

Study ID.: AAAA0000 For more information about ORC Macro, visit our website, <http://www.orcmacro.com>

INITIAL CONTACT LETTER TO SURVIVORS
(COMMISSION LOGO)

Name
Address 1
Address 2

Dear {Name Of The Respondent}:

This letter is to request your participation in a study being conducted by the Veterans' Disability Benefits Commission which was created by Public Law 108-136, the National Defense Authorization Act of 2004. Its members were appointed by the President and the leaders of the Congress. The Commission is charged with assessing the benefits that are provided to veterans and their survivors for disabilities and deaths due to military service. The purpose of the study is to give advice to Congress and the President about survivors' benefits. If you would like to know more about the Commission, I urge you to check our website at: www.vetscommission.org

A major part of our study is a survey about how VA's survivor benefits impact your life. You were randomly selected to participate because you receive payments from the VA's Dependency Indemnity Compensation program (DIC). The survey will take about 30 minutes. We hired a respected research organization, ORC Macro, to interview you by phone. **All of the answers you give will be kept *strictly confidential* and will be used for research purposes only.**

I share your concerns about the recent theft of VA records—including mine—from the home of a VA employee. I personally assure you that the Commission is independent of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and we are taking every precaution to make sure that your personal information is not at risk in this study. Please refer to the attached Frequently Asked Questions to find out what we are doing to keep your information safe.

Please return the enclosed card to let ORC Macro know the best phone number to reach you and the most convenient time to call. Your participation is voluntary, and you can withdraw your participation at any time. However, we hope that you will take the time to participate in this very important project in order to help us gain a better understanding about how well your needs, and the needs of other survivors are being met.

Your answers, along with those of other survivors who make up the national sample, will tell us about how benefits affect the quality of survivors' lives. We will use the survey results to make recommendations to Congress about the benefits for survivors. **Your answers will not affect any VA benefits that you receive.** On behalf of my fellow Commissioners, I thank you for your assistance on this very important project.

Sincerely,

James Terry Scott,
Lieutenant General, US Army, Retired

Chairman

DRAFT Survivor's QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

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Who are you surveying?

We are surveying a representative sample of survivors of veterans who receive Disability and Indemnity Compensation benefits from VA.

Why should I participate?

You have been selected to participate in the survey as a part of a nationally representative sample of survivors of veterans. Your participation is voluntary, but very important because your answers will represent your circumstances and experiences, as well as those of other survivors who are in the same situation.

Why should I answer the questions?

You should voluntarily answer the questions so that your views are heard and counted. This is your chance to tell the Commission and Congress about how your VA survivor benefits affect your life. You will not benefit directly from completing the survey. There are no foreseeable risks to you if you participate in the survey, but you may feel uncomfortable with some of the questions

What kinds of questions will you ask?

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How will I know the person calling is really the ORC Macro interviewer?

The interviewer will give you his or her first and last name, and say that they are calling from ORC Macro about the letter from General Scott.

Can a family member assist if I have difficulty hearing or speaking?

If you need a family member to assist you with the interview, or to arrange for a more convenient time, let the ORC Macro interviewer know. They will set up an appointment for the interview that is convenient for you and the family member who assists you.

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No. Your VA benefits are authorized by law. Your VA benefits *cannot* be reduced or stopped if you refuse to answer any or all of the survey questions.

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anyone. Because of these precautions, the interviewers who call you will only know your name, but not your address or other information about you. A computer will dial your phone number unless we have difficulty getting the right number to reach your. We are doing everything possible to make sure you are protected.

What will you do with my answers?

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Who do I call when I am ready to do the survey?

You can call ORC Macro toll-free at 1-800-xxx-xxxx to complete the survey. They will be there Monday through Friday from 9:00 AM until 5:00 PM Eastern Time. Remember, you need to have the **pink card** in this envelope when you call to do the survey.

Who do I call if I have questions about my VA benefits?

If you have questions about your VA benefits, you can call VA toll free at 1-800-827-1000 or visit their website, www.va.gov

Who do I call if I have a problem with the survey?

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[Enter name], choose how you'd like to complete our survey . . .

Call us toll free at **1-800-000-0000** to schedule or complete the interview. ***You will need this card when you call.***

If you prefer that we call you, we need your phone number and the times when it is most convenient to talk with you. Please write your telephone number, including the area code:

Area Code: Number -

When is it most convenient for us to call? Check the day(s) and time(s) when you would like us to call.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	
Sunday							
Morning	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Afternoon	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Evening	•	•	•	•	•	•	•

If you have any questions, call our toll-free number. We are happy to answer your questions.

Return this card in the pre-addressed, postage-paid envelope or use it to call us.

Thanks for your help!

Study ID.: AAAA0000 For more information about ORC Macro, visit our website, <http://www.orcmacro.com>